THE MENACE

OF

HINDU IMPERIALISM

(By Swami Dharma Theerthaji Maharaj, B.A., LL.B.)

President, Hindu Missionary Society, Lahore.

I have read considerable portions of it with much interest and admiration, and am prepared to admit that it is a very remarkable book written courageously and independently.—*Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru.*

The book will prove where we do actually stand and I hope every Hindu would carefully read it—*Sir P. C. Ray, Calcutta.*

The book is written with a point of view which I appreciate very much. I wish the Hindus would read it —*Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.*

The book is written with a distinction of style and clearness of vision.—*Sir Jogendra Singh, Simla.*

The whole thing is very stimulating.—*Sir K. V. Reddi, -Chancellor, Annamalai University.*

I am also glad to notice that Swamiji has laid stress on promotion of the cause of Hindu-Muslim Unity.—*bdul Qadir, Lahore.*

I have not seen a more powerful indictment of the and priestcraft so far. The book will certainly rove a most useful addition to the Anti-Caste Literature. —*Ganga Prasad, M.A., ex-Chief Justice, Theri (Garhwal).*

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OF

HINDU IMPERIALISM

BY

SWAMI DHARMA THEERTHAJI MAHARAJ (B.A., LL.B.),

President, Hindu Missionary Society,

Lahore

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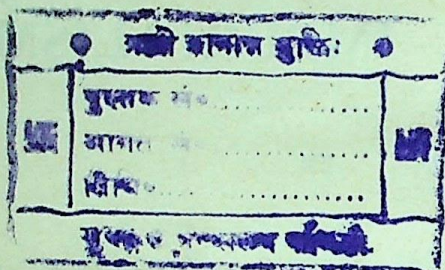
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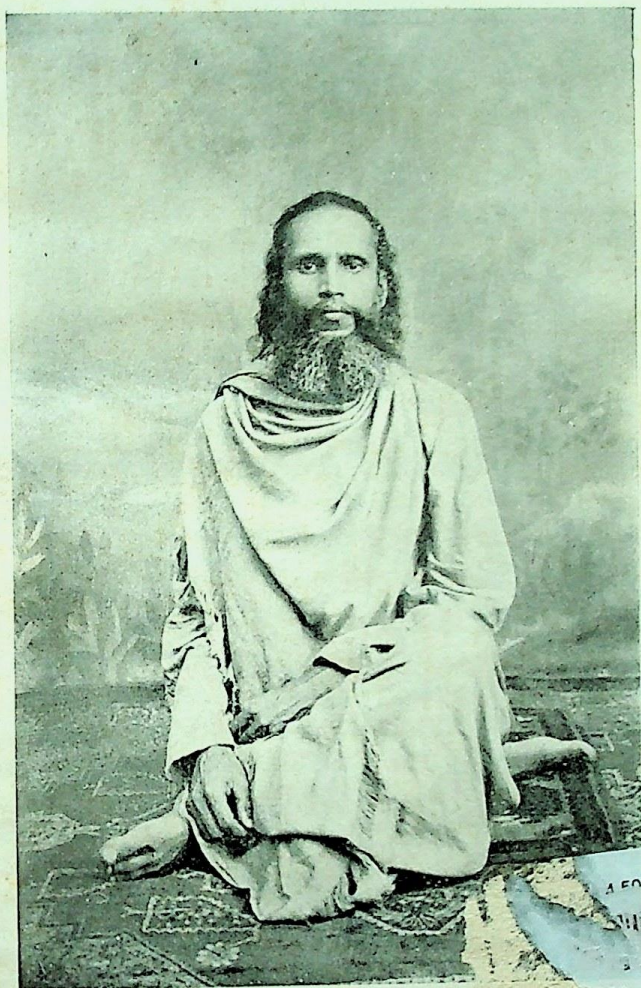
Swami Dharma Theerthaji Maharaj

TO

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

LIBERATOR OF SLAVES

and

DEFENDER OF DEMOCRACY

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

As the Secretary (1938-1941) and a worker of the Jat-Pat Torak Mandal, Lahore, and otherwise, I have been serving the cause of the "No-Caste" movement for many years. When I completed the "No-Caste" campaign in connection with the Census of 1941, I felt that without a new light and a new guide, no further progress could be made. The advent of Sree Swami Dharma Theerthaji Maharaj to the Punjab was therefore a Godsent to me. He came with all the qualifications, experience, wisdom and inspiration necessary for giving the lead. I at once placed my services at his disposal.

Swamiji hails from Malabar. He was born in a highly educated and respectable family and had a brilliant educational career. He took the B.A. degree in Madras and the LL.B. degree in Bombay. He was for some time in the palace service of H. H. the Maharaja of Cochin and afterwards practised as an advocate. About seventeen years ago he met his Guru, that great saint and reformer, Sree Narayana Gurudev of Malabar. Giving up his practice and abandoning home and country Swamiji became a humble disciple of the Gurudev and organised the well-known Missionary Society, the Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham of which he was the General Secretary for many years. The Gurudev has a following of nearly 23 lakhs of people and his mission has achieved wonderful success in that part of the country in obliterating caste differences. Swamiji wanted to place the work for Hindu emancipation and unity on a national basis, and about two years ago he started on foot on a pilgrimage of study and penance, seeking inspiration for the great work in absolute renunciation and complete self-surrender to God. After about a year spent like an ordinary mendicant moving from village to village, he was persuaded by some devotees to stay in Rajahmundry. It was when he was living in a small hut there that he received the inspiration to write the present volume.

This book is to be the preparation for a great movement—the Hindu Congress—which the Swamiji is planning to start as indicated in Chapter XXIII.

Selfless workers are the first requisite of all movements. Swamiji did not like the idea of establishing an Ashram or Mutt as Sadhus generally do. He wants to bring together Sannyasins and other dedicated souls to serve India as the missionaries of a new life of true social freedom and brotherhood. Instead of an Ashram Swamiji has started the Hindu Missionary Society along the lines of the Servants of India Society, with the object of working for Hindu Freedom, Hindu-Muslim Unity and Human Brotherhood. As the Secretary of the Society I am privileged to send out this book, the first instalment of the Society's contribution to national reconstruction.

Swamiji wants to present to the Hindu public a text-book or rather a scripture of Hindu religion which will offer a complete philosophy of life and conduct to every Hindu who wants to save himself from caste and priestcraft, and who is prepared to put his faith in the Supreme God and his own spiritual nature. He thinks that the Bhagavad Gita when properly interpreted will satisfy the need for a scripture of Hindu religion which all can read and study and apply in their daily life. He has therefore written a short interpretation of the essential religion of the Gita, under the title "Yoga for All." It will be a profound revelation to students of the spiritual life just as much as the present volume will be to lovers of freedom. The translation of both the books into Hindi or Urdu has been taken up, and we hope to be able to publish them soon.

In the preparation of the present volume, Swamiji has received loving kindness and valuable help from Sree Kamamma Garu (Edla Ramdas Mutt, Rajahmundry), Sree Swami Siddhayya, Sree Addapally, Seemanthini Garu, M.A., L.T., and above all Miss M.A. Bald, M A., Ph.D., of St. John's College, Agra, to all of whom the Society expresses its grateful thanks. Our thanks are also due to Mr. C. Wollen of the Northern India Printing and Publishing Company for the neat printing.

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THE MENACE OF

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nationality has to be built on self-knowledge and self-culture, on a correct understanding of the past and a courageous shaping of the future. We have sufficiently realised our inherent national strength and need not be afraid now of a frank examination of some outstanding weaknesses. Our number is so large that even in a crippled condition it is not possible for other people to ride roughshod over our rights and feelings with impunity for any length of time. We and the world at large have known enough of our past history, culture and achievement, and no reasonable person would consider us an uncivilised race though some of our national defects are frankly admitted. We are not behind any other people in our intellectual capacity or moral eminence and should not need any bolstering up of vital shortcomings in a spirit of vain prestige. Providence has made our country so abundantly self-sustaining that even the most cruel economic exploitation will not disable us beyond a certain limit. The continuance for some years or decades more of the uncomfortable imperialism imposed

upon the country by its present rulers will not ruin us beyond redemption. There is nothing in fact which ought to dissuade us from a fearless examination and exposure of some of our national foibles which have kept us in the tutelage of other nations and cultures for many centuries in the past, and which are even to-day, the main source of our inefficiency as a nation. If at any time the Indian nation ceases to live, it will undoubtedly be a case of suicide and not of murder. All the circumstances, historical, cultural, racial, geographical and economic are in favour of India existing as a strong united nation. No possible combination of external forces can deprive us of our rights or deny us our independence, or exploit us, unless our own internal unfitness allows them to prey upon us. If, therefore, we have been fettered in the past and are even now enslaved, it must be more due to our persistence in our follies than to the superiority of the conquerors. A small group of even civilised people may be kept under subjection by an immensely stronger group by sheer physical force. A numerous community of uncivilised people may be subjugated by a smaller nation more civilised and better organised. But a huge nation numerically and culturally great, as India, cannot be dominated by mere force by another smaller nation, except with their consent voluntarily given or helplessly admitted as a consequence of internal disruption. We have been great in the past; why are we not great to-day? We were masters of our country at one time; why are we now a subject people? We were a united community once; how did all the present suicidal differences arise? We could withstand and repel the invasion of foreign

adventurers in good old days ; why are we unable to protect ourselves now ? We were, at one time, teaching the rest of the world religion as well as politics, arts and sciences ; why are we now sitting at the feet of other nations to learn to rule ourselves ? We cannot attribute this colossal fall from such eminence to any external circumstance or characterise it as a freak of history. The fatal disease must be in our own constitution. What is that disease ? Our ancestors must have egregiously blundered in the past and so must have fallen. We must be similarly blundering in the present ; or we would not be what we are—a nation under guardianship. We must answer these self-questions honestly if we would recover our strength.

No sense of false prestige should stand in the way. Nations are being made and unmade, raised up and pulled down as toy-houses by the restless people of Europe, regardless of human life and in defiance of all the noble sentiments which sustain that life from age to age. We too might be tempted to build a cheap nationality on flimsy foundations. It is possible to hide the cancer that is consuming us, with laurels of organised self-flattery and false patriotism. It is possible to frighten the foreign master into a relaxation of his grip upon us by an exhibition of feigned unity and strength. We have been doing a good deal of both these things. A long-suffering people may be excused for adopting such methods in their natural eagerness for a larger life. But unless we radically cure ourselves, the greatness and freedom we have lost we may again lose in the future, even if we succeed in extricating the country from British Imperialism now.

Foreign domination has never been an unmixed evil in the growth of nations. On the other hand, it has in many cases helped to bring out the latent strength and individuality of the conquered people as a reaction against subjection, and purge the evils which made foreign domination possible. It has often instilled courage into the hearts of the subject people to reconstruct their own national life and make it formidable against foreign aggression as well as internal disruption. Most of the nations of Europe had to pass through the ordeal of domination before they emerged into independent national existence. In Russia and England the domination of a foreign race and a ruling caste proved to be nature's preparation for uniting the peoples and making them two great nations. Spain, Italy, France, Germany and the Balkans were each subjected to the uncomfortable and often oppressive rule of conquerors before they realised their nationality. A loose psychological or cultural unity or, vaguer still, spiritual unity such as India claims to possess, is not a sufficiently concrete foundation for welding the composite population of this vast country into a stable political unity. If British Imperialism will bring home to us the necessity of organising ourselves for effective functioning as a nation and crush out the obstinate elements of disunion, we shall have learnt the lesson which Providence has been forcing us to learn through many centuries of internal wars, foreign invasions and restless yearning for peace and liberty. The spirit of angry revolt is becoming widespread ; but it seems to be directed chiefly against the present rulers and very little against the more dangerous enemies within the country—the social and religious injustices,

inequalities, intolerances and exploitation. In the early days of the national movement social and religious reconstruction was recognised as an essential part of the struggle for freedom. The national leaders were enthusiastic reformers who stressed the need to harmonise the conflicting elements and to evolve a truer national life based on a more substantial equality, justice and brotherhood. That vital part of nation-building is being deplorably neglected by the later fighters for freedom. There is a growing tendency to precipitate the complete removal of British control irrespective of consequences, and even a defiant refusal to consider the consequences. Too much reliance is being placed on the catchwords and methods of European political agitation. The peoples' true interests are being overlooked. It is time to protest.

We have always been a nation of believers in God, in the Divine Guidance of human affairs, and one of the cardinal tenets of our faith is that God rules according to the law of Karma (action and re-action) giving unto each nation according to its worth and its past Karma (acts). The misfortune which has dogged our steps for so many long centuries must have its justification in our bad Karma. We must fearlessly investigate our past to know where we have erred and how we can rectify our mistakes.

" We are hoping to build a modern nation on the imaginary greatness of the past and not on the strength of present attainments. We rely for success more on a clever and often false presentation of our case than on a just settlement of accounts. We are adopting the ancient method of the Vedas and the Puranas of blackening the character and belittling

the greatness of our adversaries in order to gain victory, while our own foibles and wickednesses remain unaltered. We are taught to believe that we are a unique people superior to all the rest of mankind, as if we can attain freedom by this sort of self-adulation or yogic meditation on the divinity of our national self. We are persuaded to forget all the present injustices, oppressions and suffering in order to preserve the sublime culture of our ancestors which has kept us in ignorance, poverty and servility all these centuries. We are assured that the intellectual and moral slavery of the masses, for generation after generation through their exploitation by a class of hereditarily superior men, resulting in the ruin of both, is a divinely ordained "destiny" and that the economic profiteering of the British rulers is the only danger to our existence. We are induced to take for granted that the good things of modern civilisation, such as liberty, equality and fraternity, material progress, scientific advancement, economic well-being, organised charity and institutional religion, are all either intrinsically bad in themselves, or wholly unsuited to our peculiar constitution or are but mere unrealisable dreams leading only to disappointment, while all along, the sermonisers have been absorbing and unscrupulously using for self-aggrandisement and exploitation of the masses most of the evils and cruel weapons of modern civilisation. They remind us again and again, that the Aryan masters of India who called the natives Rakshasas, and Vanaras, prayed to the gods for the annihilation of the whole native race, denied to them true religion and all other amenities of civilisation, used the powers of government, religion, literature and wealth to forge

fetters of subjection of the masses and to preserve their own monopoly of all the things worth living for in this world, attacked, conquered, enslaved and emasculated us, as a divinely ordained plan for the preservation of Eternal Dharma, for our gradual spiritual evolution through many births and deaths, and for the general civilising of humanity with the sacrifice of our manliness and freedom in the fire of Aryan lust and selfishness. While these benefactors of humanity are still keeping their strangulating grip round our throats they want us to fight against British Imperialism and politely console us by saying that it is their strong grip that preserves mutual friendship and co-operation. We have lived the life of self-abnegation too long; the iron has eaten into our flesh and is beginning to break our bones. Our minds reel when we think of the oblivion which surrounds us. The Aryan masters unrelentingly look on, preferring to die with their slave brethren to living as equals in a community of free men and women. Our pathetic story has not been told, because our tongues have lost their capacity to speak." A considerable section of the intelligent masses of India have begun to think in the above strain and are growing distrustful of their Hindu masters.

So far as the Hindus are concerned, all power has remained for many centuries in the hands of a small group of hereditary exploiters whose life and interests are even to-day antagonistic to the welfare of the masses of India. The chief national institutions of the Hindus such as the Sacred Literature, the Social Organisation, the Religious Institutions and the State have been originated, developed and used, and are being now used with the primary

object of keeping the masses ignorant, servile and disunited for exploitation by the privileged classes.

Brahmanism is the name used by historians to denote the exploiters and their civilisation. It may be defined as a system of socio-religious domination and exploitation of the Hindus based on caste, priestcraft and false philosophy,—caste representing the scheme of domination, priestcraft the means of exploitation, and false philosophy a justification of both caste and priestcraft. Started by the Brahman priests and developed by them through many centuries of varying fortunes and compromises with numerous ramifications, it has under foreign rule, become the general culture of the Hindus and is, at the present day, almost identical with organised Hinduism.

Brahmanism was not confined to the Brahman community, though they have always been its foremost champions and most interested promulgators. From time to time other Hindu communities, foreign invaders and Indian princes have supported it when they found it useful for their aggrandisement, and thus helped it to become the power that it is to-day. The scheme of castes and priestcraft was wide enough to afford scope for numerous exploiting groups, so that despotic monarchs, adventurous kings wishing to become emperors, usurpers to thrones desirous of priestly support, new invaders such as the Scythians, the Chinese, the Turks, the Greeks, the Rajputs, the Muhammadans and the modern Europeans, and Indian princes aspiring to Kshatriyahood and relying on Brahman help,—all have patronised it in turns when it served them in their conquest or exploitation.

When the Indian people lost their political freedom, they were obliged to accept Brahmanism as their religion and culture and submit to its injustices, untruths and oppressions. Born and bred, generation after generation, in the atmosphere of servility, they now see virtue in its sins, wisdom in its deceptions, and freedom in its serfdom. It has never stood for any consistent philosophy or doctrines or ethics but has adjusted its methods and principles to suit changing situations subject to its triple programme. Its strength depends on an ingenious organisation of society in which the hereditary priest is supreme, priestcraft is the highest religion, and philosophy is the hand-maid of priestcraft. Originally the scheme contemplated only four caste divisions, but the process of classification by birth and social exclusiveness once brought into fashion gave rise to many thousands of castes and sub-castes all of which found a place in the priests' plan and they are to-day impenetrable barriers to Hindu unification.

Similarly, priestcraft assumed many forms. Expensive sacrifices attended with slaughter of animals, drinking, dancing and feasting were its feature in the first stage. During the ascendency of Buddhism, it originated various secret rites, idolatrous ceremonies, yogic tricks, and mystic formulæ, some of which are too horrid to mention. Later it took the popular form of templecraft which is at present its chief means of exploitation. False philosophy is a later growth. For a very long period Brahmanism did not care for philosophy. In fact, intellectual freedom was opposed to it. None of the great philosophers supported Brahmanism. Most of them have condemned it downright. It depended for success

entirely on the political power of the priests. When that power finally passed out of their hands to non-Hindu rulers they adapted the ancient philosophical speculations to explain and justify the claims of Brahmanism.

In recent years, after learning became widespread, and contact with Muhammadanism and Christianity roused the critical spirit regarding religious matters, and numerous reformers attacked the entire system of idolatry and rituals, various apologetic and mystifying false theories have been propounded to give Brahmanism a show of reasonableness and surround it with awe and mystery. Otherwise it did not rely on its appeal to reason or moral feelings or its intrinsic benefit to its followers. It derived its power from the patronage of monarchs who submitted to priestly domination or were willing to become parties to the scheme of exploitation.

Even British Imperialism is relenting but Brahman Imperialism knows no remorse. It is as cruel as ever. It would see its victims die under its weight rather than relax its deadly grip. Fifty million untouchables may renounce Hinduism in a body ; Brahmanism would stick to its guns. Hindu society may be hewn away limb by limb by proselytising missions, Brahmanism will chuckle behind temple doors. India may live or perish, Brahmanism will pursue its career unaffected. If the Goddess of Victory were to appear before the devotees of Hindu orthodoxy with the gift of Indian Swaraj in one hand and Brahmanism in the other and ask them to choose between the two, India's fate would be sealed for ever. The exploiters have not yet shown a change of heart or policy, nor the willingness to

identify their interests with those of the commons of India. All previous attempts to consolidate the Hindus as a nation were opposed and more or less frustrated by their wise men who are playing the same role to-day. Under such circumstances Swarai would mean a revival of the ancient Imperialism and all the reactionary forces which have throughout India's history thwarted the progress of the common people.

No people can become competent to work political democracy so long as they are willing victims of priestly tyranny. There can be no real rapprochement between the Hindus and the Muhammadans, or for the matter of that, between the Hindus and any other self-respecting nation, unless the Hindus extricate themselves from the servitude of the Brahmanical social order, and organise their society on democratic principles. Modern European Nationalism does not offer a desirable political ideal for India. Indian Swaraj should mean a reconciliation of the Hindus and the Muhammadans and of the East and the West for the realisation of a higher brotherhood of peoples than that represented by European nationalities. Hindu consolidation can be effected only through political means and should be the immediate object of Hindu Nationalism.

While tracing the history of the gradual enslavement of the Hindu masses we have had to mention names of communities and classes whose selfishness or ignorance has contributed to their downfall. The present generation is only to a small extent responsible for the inherited vices of society, and even when a class of people are found to have been chiefly responsible for a certain state of affairs, we should not

forget the fact that in all communities there have been honourable persons who were an asset to the nation. In our own day men and women of all castes and creeds have come forward to shoulder the responsibilities of national reconstruction and make the sacrifices without which no great cause can succeed.

British Imperialism does not mean the British people ; it symbolises a vast system and has numerous votaries among Indians also. Brahmanism, similarly, does not signify the Brahmans exclusively, but an ancient order of things of which the Brahmans are the leaders and champions. It stands for the aggregate of ideals, institutions and past history of the socio-religious constitution of the Hindu society. At the same time, we should not lose sight of the fact that the cause we have to serve is the welfare of the entire nation and not the sentiment of separate classes or castes. If, therefore, some of us Brahmans, or Kshatriyas or others have to accept a larger share of the blame for the disaster which has befallen us all, we should not hesitate to welcome the opportunity. That circumstance should be an incentive to put forth still greater efforts to right the wrong we have done. It is the system which is throttling us all equally, it is that pernicious system that is the subject of our criticisms. Modern capitalism is the magnificent achievement of many generations of eminent economists and yet it is at the present day recognised to be the most potent danger to the peace of the world. Scientists who have made possible the inconceivable horrors of modern warfare are often accused of having prostituted their genius for the destruction of humanity,

though their achievements for prosperity and peace are indescribably great. Such has been the fate of all human institutions, the mystery of an unfathomable destiny which rules over us all. What we reverently build up today and consider more precious than our lives, our grandchildren often condemn as the incredible bunglings of ignorant ancestors.

"Priestly supremacy and royal despotism are inevitable when the people become enervated and feeble, and are incapable of taking care of their conscience or their political rights. Priests and kings are no more responsible for these results than the people themselves, indeed the former are less responsible for assuming undue authority than the latter for submitting to such authority. Such chains are received ungrudgingly by a feeble and lifeless people ; when the people awake to life and vigour, the chains fall asunder." So wrote the late R. C. Dutt. The oppressors as well as the oppressed, sometimes the latter more than the former, are responsible for the continuance of an oppressive system.

Our object in this volume is to trace the causes and course of India's enslavement, and awaken the conscience of all parties. There is no desire to wound anybody's feelings. There is no rancour in our heart. We believe that the socio-religious order which has brought the whole Hindu race to their knees is more satanic than the worst foreign imperialism and must be crushed before India can be free. We have renounced everything in order to be able to serve the lowliest of the Hindus. Our life is dedicated to the cause of Hindu emancipation. We searched for the causes of thraldom . The results of our investigation and thinking are expressed in this volume without any effort

to conceal unpleasant facts. The spirit of lamentation is also entirely absent. The Hindu masses are getting infected with a grim determination to re-establish their free-born rights on the rock of true liberty rather than on self-deception, feigned unity and disguised exploitation.

Chapter II

THE ARYAS, THE ABORIGINES AND THE INDIANS (2000—1400 B.C.)

More than 4,000 years ago, the Aryas are believed to have come and settled down in the region of the Punjab from their original home in middle Asia. Historians get their information about these ancient settlers, or rather invaders, from the Rig-Veda which proves beyond doubt that the people who composed those songs had developed a comparatively high civilisation. But adventurers who leave their homes for distant countries are not generally the best men of the community, but the lower classes with more physical stamina and animal courage than cultural attainments. The earliest Aryan invaders were no exception to this rule. They were bold, hardy, unscrupulous, superstitious, and even cruel adventurers who were ready to use their powerful right arm against all those who opposed them and to take by force whatever they wanted in the new land to which they came.

It is quite certain that they did not come with a mission, with a sense of their superior culture and a holy desire to civilise the barbarians. Even when

they found that many inhabitants of India were less advanced in civilisation than themselves, they hardly ever showed any desire to raise them to their own level or to impart to them their refinements. On the contrary their attitude was characterised by haughty exclusiveness and cruel contempt for the aborigines until they came into contact with a people as civilised as themselves in the Gangetic valley and began to mingle freely with them. The Aryas were essentially a race of warriors. They were lured by the natural wealth and beauty of the country from one place to another and steadily extended their migrations overcoming and sometimes mercilessly extirpating the aborigines who opposed their march, until they were able to settle down in peace and develop powerful kingdoms in the Gangetic valley.

Dominated by the military and predatory spirit, they loved the life of activity, adventure and enjoyment of all the good things of the world. They invoked their gods constantly to destroy the aboriginal tribes whom they contemptuously called "Dark-skinned Dasyus" and Rakshasas (demons). Many hymns of the Rig-Veda are fervent appeals to the gods to annihilate the Dasyus. "We are surrounded on all sides by the Dasyus. They do not perform sacrifices. They are unbelievers. Their practices are all different. They are not men ! O ! Destroyer of Foes! Kill them, destroy the Dasa race." (R. V. I. 100-8) There are many such hymns which bring to our mind the fanatical hatred of the infidels by the Pathans, and of the pagan by early Christian conquerors. Health, wealth, prosperity and power in this world were the chief and almost sole concern of the Aryas, and to them religion was a means of acquiring these.

To most Hindus of our own day, religion presents itself as the mysterious revelation of things beyond the present mundane existence and a means of liberation from this life of unhappiness. The Aryas of the Rig-Veda entertained quite a different conception of life. They implicitly believed in their gods and communicated with them in hymns, as dutiful children of a loving father. In all their successes and failures, their joys and sorrows, in war and peace, in the cultivation of the land and tending of cattle, for begetting good sons and daughters, for timely rains, for protection of their property and themselves against enemies, in all situations, they looked up to their gods with a fervent, imploring heart. The Rig-Veda abounds in earnest invocations to the gods for their help and protection by a simple-minded truthful people. But they did not neglect their work ; they were enterprising, indefatigable men of action.

Their gods were Indra, Varuna, Agni, Vayu and other powers mainfested in the varied phenomena of nature. Siva and Vishnu and their numerous aspects worshipped by the modern Hindus were unknown to the ancient Aryas. Their mode of worship was also quite different. They had no temples or idols. The daily worship was performed in every house, both morning and evening, by offering in the sacrificial fire ghee, milk, meat, Soma-juice and other articles which formed their usual food. Occasionally special sacrifices were performed, and goats, cows, bulls and horses were slaughtered for offering to the gods and entertaining guests. The Vedic hymns were intended to be sung at the sacrifices.

The composers of these Riks or hymns were called Rishis. Rishi means a hymn-writer. The Hindus of the present day think of the Rishi as a man of divine wisdom who led a life of Tapas or great austerity in the seclusion of the forest. Therefore what the Rishis are believed to have said is considered something sacred which no man should question. Of course, there were exceptionally great and wise men, and also women, among the Rishis. But they lived like the other members of the tribe with their wives and children, earned property, cultivated land, and owned large herds of cattle. Some Rishis lived in the palace of the chiefs or kings and conducted the sacrificial ceremonies for them, for which they obtained rich rewards of hundreds of cows, gold pieces and cloth. The Rishis were also doughty warriors who fought with the aborigines and killed them in hundreds and thousands. Except for their learning, they were in all other respects like other men and women of society.

The whole people, including the Kings and the Rishis, were known as the "Vis" or "Visas." It was this word which later on became "Vaisyas." There were no Brahmans or Kshatriyas. The caste system did not exist then. All the people were of one community, lived together, ate and drank together, and intermarried. The Yajnopavita or the sacred cloth was worn only at the time of sacrifice by those who performed it. The kings or "Vispathis" were generally chiefs or heads of separate tribes and lived among the people. Women were not subjected to any special restrictions. There was no child-marriage, widow-marriage was common and Sati was unknown. The ancient Aryan society was free

from all the abuses and injustices which a priestly class afterwards imposed upon their descendants. There was, however, one powerful vice—they indulged in drinking the liquor of Soma. There was nothing so precious as Soma which was considered as the most favourite food even of the gods. There are numerous hymns in the Rig-Veda in praise of Soma. They show how simple-minded and even childish the people and the Rishis often were. The vice of drink and cruel animal sacrifices increased to so large an extent as to create a split in the community. One party left the country in protest and went to Iran where they founded the Parsi race and the Parsi religion.

In those days, fighting was almost a daily necessity. People had always to be on the watch. Every house had to provide strong men to take up bow and arrows and face the attacking barbarians at a moment's notice. Some effective arrangement had to be made to meet this perpetual danger. The whole community had to co-operate in the protection of the country by self-discipline and a wise division of duties. Our fore-fathers rose to the occasion and evolved that very intelligent and quite natural institution known as the four Ashramas—Brahmacharya, Gryhastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa.

The institution had its origin in the natural and instinctive division of a man's life into four stages according to his Guna or capacities and Karma or duties. Until the attainment of manhood, a boy was to devote himself to his studies under the direction of the elders. He was to cultivate the Guna or qualities of obedience, humility, simplicity, reverence for elders and absolute devotion to the task assigned to

him without being diverted by the struggle for existence in which the older people were constantly engaged. His duty was to serve the teacher and learn from him the duties of an Aryan. Service was the method of study. From rising in the early hours of the morning to retiring to sleep at night, the Brahmachari (student) moved and worked with the teacher in performing the sacrifices, repeating the hymns, preparing the meals, tending cattle, and working in the field. Thus constantly attending on the Guru, he learnt all the duties he would be called upon to discharge in after-life. A student at this stage of life had no right or status or independence. He was not a man yet, not an Aryan. He was really a Sudra living as the faithful servant of his master.

His entry into manhood was marked by solemn ceremonies. He married and settled down as a householder or Gryhastha in the joint family which contained besides himself, his father, grandfather, their wives and children and others. It was at this stage that he was called upon to share the responsibilities of managing the family. He had to attend diligently to cultivation, look after the cattle and supply the daily needs of all the members of the family. He was the producer, the preserver and supplier of all the necessities of peaceful life. That was his duty or Karma. He was to develop the Guna or qualities of industry, generosity, truthfulness, economy, attention to the elders, and love of children. He was not yet the owner of the family property, for the elders were still living. He was a trustee holding and managing the common wealth for the good of all the members of the family. Such a householder was the Vaisya.

Fighting with enemies, both men and wild animals, was as much a function of ordinary life as cultivation of the land and management of the home. The old members of the family were physically unfit for that rough work. The Brahmacharins or students were also not fit, both physically and from considerations of their duty as students. It would be cruel to separate from their wives and children the recently married young men, the Gryhasthas, who should be given a reasonable opportunity to enjoy life in peace. The men available for fighting were those who had not grown too old, nor were too young, and had had sufficient opportunities of enjoying life and might be now reasonably asked to leave the ease and comforts of the family hearth, betake themselves to the forests, camp there if necessary, develop physical strength by self-control, practice of Yoga and other exercises, and thus live in the service of the State or the tribe for its common good. Such a man who had attained the Vanaprastha stage was the Kshatriya. He was to cultivate the Guna or qualities of courage, self-restraint, spirit of sacrifice, endurance and magnanimity. His chief work was to keep the public fire burning in the forest-borders, perform the exercises for preserving his body in a strong and healthy condition and by vigilant watching protect the whole tribe from the depredations of enemies, rival clans and animals.

Passing some years like that in the service of the State, living often in the forests, he soon approached the end of the journey of life. He studied and served as a Brahmachari, managed the household and cultivated civic life as a Gryhastha, led an austere outdoor life as a Vanaprastha, and was then, having

completed all life's duties, allowed the well-earned rest and peace of a Sannyasin. He retired from active life to think of the gods, and the life hereafter. He should no longer be anxious about wealth or wife or children who were quite safe in the protection of the joint family nor undertake any worldly responsibilities. He might continue to live in the forest itself as a Rishi or returning to the community set up a Gurukula or Vedic school for training the rising generation of students or might even wander about as a man of complete renunciation. With all the wisdom of age and experience of an active life nobly spent at home and in the service of the State, with passions controlled by self-discipline and austerities, with all selfish ties and cares renounced, living in the seclusion of the Gurukula or the hermitage in the forest, the Sannyasin led a simple, quiet happy life.

He delighted to think and talk about gods and heroes and the life to come. He freely imparted his wisdom to the young men who served him and who had attached themselves to him in search of knowledge. The young and the old, the rich and the poor, the king and the people sought his advice and guidance in matters concerning this world as well as the other. He was the oldest member of the family, the Guru of the rising generation, the most learned and experienced man, the owner of all the family property, whose happiness was the first consideration of all the other members. As the leader of the tribe, his advice was found very necessary in the conduct of the common affairs of the tribe. His blessing was essential for the success of all enterprises. His consent was the final authority for all actions. He had a right to be taken care of and revered by the

whole nation. Kings and leaders of men went to consult him and win his approval. Such a Sannyasin was the Brahman, the father, philosopher, friend and guide of all.

Whether in the forest or in the Gurukula, he was always surrounded by young Brahmacharins who vied with one another in serving him more devotedly than even his kith and kin. They had gathered round him attracted by his piety and learning. They went through the daily sacrifices, prayers and study along with the teacher. The Vedic hymns were learned directly from the mouth of the Guru with their correct intonation. The duties and qualities of the Ashramas were inculcated into the minds of the students again and again. This subject in fact was comprehensive ; it was a complete preparation for citizenship and included even training in the use of arms. The daily routine—the sacrifices, cooking, tending the cattle, attending to the cultivation, besides personal attentions, kept the teacher and the Guru always busy. Some brought fuel and water, some gathered flowers, some milked the cows, others cleaned the surroundings and prepared for the sacrifice, chit-chatting and running about, full of joy and enthusiasm and boisterous energy, restrained by respect for the Guru whose presence was everywhere felt. After the mid-day meal the teacher and the pupils gathered under the shade of an ancient tree ; stories of the heroes and gods were told ; hymns were sung ; duels were fought ; proficiency was tested. Sometimes visitors came with presents for the Guru and the Chelas and they were gladly entertained. The day's work over, grass was spread on the floor, and the teacher and

students once again sat together singing hymns and telling stories until eyes began to close in the self-forgetfulness of contentment—God's reward for a day well spent. Days and months and years passed, Guru and disciples living together until the youthful aspirants felt that they belonged more to the Gurukula than to the family of their parents; and in after life they prided themselves on being members of their Guru's Gotra. "These students lived with their teachers, served them in a menial capacity during the time of their studentship and then, after twelve years or longer made suitable presents and returned to their homes and longing relatives."*

Thus the four Ashramas denoted the four stages of life through which every Aryan had to pass in the pursuit of Kama, Artha and Dharma in this world and Moksha in the other. The four Varnas were the corresponding social groups in society—young men in the Brahmachari period were the Sudras; Gryhasthas who were responsible for all the activities of peaceful civic life were the Vaisyas; warriors of the Vanaprastha stage formed the group of Kshatriyas, and the wise men of age and learning who had retired from life to the seclusion of the Ashram or the Gurukula as Sannyasins composed the group of Brahmans. The caste system of the Hindus has nothing in common with the ancient Varna and Ashrama. Caste originated, quite in a different way, developed entirely on other lines, served completely another purpose, but the priests who helped its growth have tacked it on to the ancient names and ideals to justify it in the eyes of the people and cover up its inherent wickedness.

*Page 249, History of Civilisation in Ancient India, Vol. I, R.C. Dutt.

We have even now uncivilised wild tribes living in some of the mountains and forests of India. Four thousand years ago their number must have been very large, almost as many as the civilised people themselves. The dark-skinned barbarians whom the Aryas found in the Punjab and called Dasyus were such tribes.

In the beginning, the Aryas probably thought that the whole country was inhabited by none but the Dasyus. It was not so. As they advanced into the plains of the Gangetic valley they came into contact with highly civilised communities. Later historians have called them Dravidians, but there are also those who maintain that they were an earlier group of Aryan imigrants who had come to India many centuries before, first by sea to the south and then from there spread gradually all over the country developing a high order of culture, arts, sciences, philosophy and religion. "The Aryas came from an archaic middle Asian civilisation, the cradle of the Aryas whence came successively the imigrants who made the Mediterranean civilisation, colonised Persia and Mesopotamia and sent the forefathers of the Latin, Slav and Teuton Nations to people Europe. Later they came down to India, penetrated first to the South—the Aryan Dravidians,—and later settled in the North."*

They were anyhow, at the time of the Punjab Aryas, the dominant and the most numerous inhabitants and had lived in the country for many centuries. They had a right to be called Indians. We do not want to emphasise any doubtful racial distinctions which recent European investigators claim to

*Page 7, India—a Nation (Foreword), by Annie Beasant.

have discovered. So we shall distinguish them by the term Indians.

The Sanskrit writers say very little about them. The priests who composed the sacred books of the Hindus were very obstinate in their practice of wilfully disguising the true character and greatness of the people whom they conquered by describing them as Rakshasas (demons) and Vanaras (monkeys) and in other eccentric ways, with a view to praising the Aryan conquerors as divine beings and condemning the Indians as fit only to be slaughtered in battle. The Ramayana is a typical example of the unscrupulous methods employed by those chroniclers. The story is certainly based upon substantial historical material but it has been deliberately mixed up with so much of fiction, poetry, distortion and misrepresentation, that a discriminating Hindu would even be ashamed to own it as a book of religion in spite of its eternal appeal to the heart of man. Fortunately a good deal of the light of truth is forcing itself out through the cloud of poetic vilifications, and we can get a very good impression of the magnificence, greatness, and high moral level of the Indians and their civilisation, of which the last great representative was perhaps the mighty Ravana.

The description of Ravana's capital Lanka with its forts, palaces, watch-towers, towering buildings, abounding in wealth and luxury, and the council of ministers and generals discussing the pros and cons of war, with a courage of conviction and breadth of views that a modern legislature might well envy, and of the actual war in which divine Rama and the allies were all but crushed and were saved only by the mysterious power of a medicine, of

the superhuman feats ascribed to Ravana and his great son Indrajit, —these and a host of other events disclose a civilisation more highly evolved than that of the Aryan combatants of the Mahabharata. The remarkable sense of justice and propriety and chivalry attained by that eminent Indian King may be seen in the treatment of the captive "Sita" in Lanka, where that lovely princess with forlorn hopes of deliverance lives obdurate and defiant without a single hair of hers being harmed, and receiving all the honour and attention her royalty demanded. By the side of this noble picture, let us place the other one of the disgusting meanness and revolting beastliness of the treatment of another captive princess Draupadi by an Aryan King in the assembly of Aryan princes and nobles and in the presence of her royal husbands ;—imploring but dignified Draupadi is dragged to the assembly by rough hands, with but one loin cloth to hide her nakedness, and even that one is nearly snatched away, and the proud princess is forcibly dragged down on his naked knees by King Duryodhana,—an Aryan king indeed! To the discerning reader who can see through the clever falsification of priests who have degraded a great Indian king to the level of a demon and even the Indian allies of the Aryan conqueror to the position of monkeys, the Ramayana is more a glorification of Ravana than of Rama.

There is another account of an Indian king who lived before Rama according to tradition. He was Maha Bali during whose reign the subjects enjoyed such perfect peace, justice, liberty and prosperity, that it is said the Devas became jealous of the great ruler's reputation. The truth was that

Bali's fame, power and wealth and the devotion of his subjects were growing so rapidly that he was on the way to become the leading sovereign of India. The Aryas got jealous and the Brahman priests somehow managed to make the king surrender his authority into their hands. The memory of Bali's reign as the golden era of their country is still preserved by the people of Malabar in their annual national festival "Onam" lasting for four or more days, when the rich and the poor, the young and the old, join in the universal rejoicings and festivities, and from every home are heard joyous songs about Bali and the beating of the ancient bow-drum. The stories of Ravana and Bali are quite sufficient for our purpose though there are many others quite as reliable as these which testify to the greatness of the Indians of those days.

It is also noteworthy that some of the most famous of ancient Rishis such as Vyasa, Vasishta and Valmiki were of Indian descent. Sri Rama, Sri Krishna and the Pandavas were also probably Indians, at any rate undoubtedly of mixed origin, as they were dark in complexion unlike the white Aryan, and all of them were leaders of strong opposition to Brahmanism as we shall see hereafter. These, and other circumstances which we shall have occasion to refer to in the following pages, leave no room for doubt that the early Aryas came to an India of a glorious and hoary civilisation, though probably less virile than that of the younger Aryas. As Mr. Havell says, "But many modern writers of Oriental history proclaim as the latest discovery of science that the early Aryan invaders of India, who won the undying veneration of the people as mighty

seers and leaders of men, were only successful soldiers versed in the arts of chivalrous warfare and that they borrowed their finer culture from the Dravidians and other civilised races they conquered."*

Chapter III

INDO-ARYAN KINGDOMS

(1400—900 B.C.)

In the course of five or six centuries, the Aryas had moved down from the Punjab to the fertile valleys of the Ganges and set up powerful kingdoms —the Kurus, Panchalas, Kasis, Kosalas, Videhas vying with one another in the splendour of their courts, in the patronage of learning and valour and the pageantry of public sacrifices. The aboriginal tribes had been all subdued and the Aryas had heartily mingled with the civilised Indian peoples and their chiefs, some of whom gladly acknowledged the supremacy of the new kings. "It is here for the first time that the Aryas get into touch with not only the uncivilised aborigines who are the feature of the Punjab plains . . . . . . but also with the civilised Dravidians of India."† The two communities, the Aryas and the Indians, mingled and fused so completely in all respects that it became impossible to distinguish one from the other. Aryan kings took Indian wives and Indian kings married Aryan women. It could not be said that the Aryans were all fair and the Indians were all dark. Both had become acclimatised to the country ; there were fair and

*Pages VII and VIII Havell's History of Aryan Rule (1918), Introduction.
†Page 2, Ancient India by S. Krishnaswamy Iyyengar.

dark men and women among both, as in the present day. The daughter of a Naga king whom Arjuna married is described as fair as pure gold.

After all, the Aryas were a handful compared with the Indians who formed the huge bulk of the population. They identified themselves with the earlier inhabitants of the country who were in point of influence, culture and political importance no less advanced than themselves. No caste differences existed to prevent free intercourse between them. On the other hand, very probably, they remembered that they had both come from the same ancient home beyond the Himalayas. The Indians had adopted the new culture so thoroughly that they began to outstrip the new-comers in religious lore, spiritual genius and other arts of war and peace. It soon became impossible to say who was an Indian and who an Aryan. Some of the most famous of Rishis and heroes of that time, the greatest among them, were in all probability more Indian in their blood than Aryan. Who were Vyasa, Vasishta and Valmiki? Were not Rama, Krishna, Arjuna, Draupadi, etc. all dark-coloured? Who could say they were not Indians?

In the Mahabharta, Yudhishtra himself tells us very clearly that there had taken place a complete synthesis of the different peoples. In the Nahusha-Saptarishi legend, Yudhishtra says, "The caste O! Great Serpent (Nahusha) in the presence of the general species of mankind is at present indistinguishable in consequence of the great intermixture of races. Men of all castes beget children on women belonging to all castes indiscriminately. Men are common in speech, sexual intercourse, birth and

death. Therefore those who have an insight into the essence of things believe that conduct is the chief thing. Castes are useless when suitable conduct does not exist; for the intermixture of races has been very great indeed."* The priests had set themselves up as a hereditary class, the son following the profession of the father, and were striving to exclude all others from the priestly profession. They justified their monopolistic manœuvres by propounding the doctrine of caste divisions, and though the other sections of the society including the kings challenged these pretensions, the priests had begun to observe and enforce exclusiveness as a caste within their own social circle. Yudhishtra is clearly condemning this rising creed of Brahmanism, and points out that it was too late at that time when people had all mixed up beyond recognition to recreate artificial divisions in society.

"A Brahman was Brahman by knowledge of religion and not by birth. Numerous instances have been cited to show that men of low birth had actually entered the priestly caste by their knowledge and virtues, that the priestly caste did not acquire a monopoly of religious learning; that they often came as humble pupils to Kshatriya kings to acquire religious knowledge."† The Aryan religion itself was gradually changing by assimilating Indian beliefs and practices. The Indian gods and goddesses were accepted by the priests and included in the hierarchy of sacrificial gods. We find in the Brahmanas of this period some of these new deities, such as Siva, Vishnu, Nilakanta, Maheswara, Uma Parvathi and others who

*Page 13, Epic India, by C. V. Vydia.
†Page 69, History of Civilisation in Ancient India, Volume III—R. C. Dutt.

were unknown to the ancient Aryas. Sacrifices began to be performed in the name of these gods, identifying them with one or the other of the Aryan Devas.

In fact, a new era of goodwill, prosperity, peace and glory had been inaugurated in the Gangetic valley by the social and religious fusion of the two ancient human families giving birth to the greatest of India's Rishis and Divine Heroes and Heroines and the sublimest thoughts of India's religion and philosophy. They have given us the marvellous Vedas (except the Rig) and the Upanishads, Sree Rama, Sree Krishna, Sita, Draupadi and other names who, after more than three thousand years, still continue to reign in Hindu hearts with undiminished sanctity. The metamorphosis was so thorough that even the Punjab, the land of the pure orthodox Aryas, came to be regarded as inferior in purity and status to the sacred valleys of the Ganges sanctified by the meeting of the streams of the Ganges and the Yamuna as well as of the Aryas and the Indians. "Arya Varta, stretching from the Saraswati to the confines of the Behar and from the Himalayas to the Vindhyas forms the first circle of highest purity and it is remarkable that the Punjab which was the earliest home of the Aryas in the Vedic age is not included in this sacred circle. That realm had since then become backward in the later development of Hindu religion and culture, and was rarely alluded to even in the literature of the Epic period."* A visit to some of the parts of the Punjab later on came to be regarded as causing pollution, and purificatory ceremonies were prescribed. A new world and a new order of things,

*Page 22, History of Civilisation in Ancient India, Volume II—R. C. Dutt.

eclipsing all the past in their greatness had come into existence.

The two Epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata give us some impressions of the kings and the peoples, and their achievements as well as failures and of the days of degeneracy which followed those of marvellous prosperity. The three Vedas were compiled during this period. Then were composed the Upanishads, a legacy of sublime thoughts and aspirations which are the life and pride of Hinduism, and which have earned for India a unique place among the civilisations of the world. Under the shelter and shadow of this greatness, the priests developed their own schemes of exploitation of the people of which we shall speak in another place. The Ramayana represents the earlier and more aristocratic and more orthodox period of Indo-Aryan supremacy, and the Mahabharata the later period of luxury and magnificence, the declining years of degeneracy and the closing scenes of disruption and fall. (Some historians put it the other way.)

In the Ramayana, the kings lead purer and more restrained lives, there is greater respect for the priestly class and their laws, and less of indulgence and profligacy. The rivalry between kings and priests has not become acute, though Janaka has started the opposition in the learned assemblies, and lower down in the south, Parasurama was bringing matters to a climax by his slaughter of the Kshatriyas. The Mahabharata bears testimony to the degeneracy that followed worldly prosperity; life seems to be one continuous round of drinking, gambling, dancing, and fighting when there is no other sensation. The spirit of the nation had changed. The seriousness, the

dignity and the high sense of duty of the Ramayana period are replaced by frivolity, absence of responsibility, and light-hearted pursuit of enjoyments, but the kings seem to be more of the people and with the people. Life has become more complex ; individual liberty has increased ; and the rivalry between the two leading sections of society, the rulers and the priests, assumes immense proportions until it culminates in a disastrous war which destroys the Indo-Aryan supremacy and makes way for the aggrandisement of the Brahmans which in its turn produced a reaction and national awakening leading to the more fruitful stage of the Indian empires.

The Aryan sacrifices were originally simple offerings to the gods made by every householder on the family hearth. But that characteristic soon disappeared when there was peace and plenty. Sacrifices became public celebrations for displaying the power and wealth of kings and rich men and the pomp and mystery of priestcraft. Some of these sacrifices took weeks and months to complete and involved unconscionable expenditure of public and private funds, huge slaughter of animals, and daily indulgence in eating and drinking. "In fact the festivities at which thousands and lakhs of Brahmans, Kshatriyas and others were feasted were of the most Bacchanalian kind and perhaps did not differ much from the feasts of the voracious beef-eating Germans, the brother Aryans of the West, whether in the number of animals that were killed, or the flasks of wine that were drunk ".*

The sacrifices furnished the occasion for gambling, boasting, dancing, fighting and other dissipa-

*Page 119, Epic India, by C. V. Vydia.

tions. When the auspicious Asvamedha Yajna is going on Krishna cuts off the head of Sisupala. The vicious extent to which the gambling habit had been cultivated is abundantly proved by the stories of Nala and Yudhishtra. King Nala gambled away his kingdom, and Yudhishtra, the good and virtuous Emperor, diced away not only his kingdom but himself, his wife and brothers also. "In the Mahabharata we find Arjuna and Krishna drinking freely when they are wearied or when they are gay and joyous. The Vrishnis and the Yadavas, the tribe to which Krishna belonged were a people notorious for their drinking habits. Balarama, Krishna's brother, was a great drunkard and the Yadavas ultimately destroyed one another in a drunken brawl. In the Ramayana we find it stated in the Gangakhyana that the Suras were those who took liquor while the Asuras were those who declined it. Sita when she crosses the Ganges vows to propitiate the river with jars of liquor if she returns with her husband safe from her exile to the Dandaka forest." *

Promiscuous dancing was also in vogue. There is the description of a dance in Harivamsa. Inflamed by plentiful libations of Kadamba liquor, Balarama danced with his wife. Krishna, Baladeva, Narada, Satyabhama and others joined in and the festivity reached the climax of boisterous merry-making. At the head of these vices stood the custom of marrying many wives and maintaining a plentiful harem. Dasaratha had 350 wives, Krishna 16,000, and Duryodhana, Bhima and Arjuna had each numerous wives.

But they lived in a world quite different from

*Page 119, Epic India, by C. V. Vydia.

ours. Their magnificence might seem vices to us, and their freedom and naturalness look revolting to our tastes. It only shows that we cannot understand them from this distance of time and through the hazy pictures drawn by imaginative poets. Since the Mahabharata war, long and eventful centuries of revolutionary changes, grand achievements, catastrophic failures and mighty upheavals have rolled over the Indian continent, altering her life in every aspect. New religions, new cultures, new empires and nations and races, new heroes and heroines, have flitted through the stage of her history ; but the Hindus even now look back through these crowded millennia to the dim glories of Indo-Aryan kingdoms and derive their highest moral, intellectual and spiritual inspiration from Rama, Krishna, Janaka and other brilliant stars of that distant firmament. Such was their greatness ; such is their mystery.

Chapter IV

RISE OF BRAHMANISM AND THE CASTES

When men lived by hunting and led more or less a nomadic life, fighting with less powerful tribes who opposed their march, the most natural thing for them was to bring the spoils of war and game round a fire and enjoy them with the other members of the family or tribe. Thus gathered round the fire with their dear ones and friends, cracking jokes and singing songs while the cooking was in progress, they sometimes thought of the ancestors who had passed away and the gods who gave them strength and

success. Before the meal was enjoyed, it became a pious duty to offer a portion in the fire in the name of the departed ancestors and the unseen powers. The Vedic sacrifices must have had their origin in this innocent custom common to all primitive peoples. Every householder gradually began to feel that it was his religious obligation to share his food with the departed spirits and the gods. The domestic sacrifice became a daily ceremony. When there was a fighting expedition in which many families took part, the spoils were similarly brought round a great fire and enjoyed or divided among all. The elaborate Asvamedha Yajna (horse-sacrifice) of later days served to a great extent the same purpose of solemnising a victory and dividing the spoils. Such traditional observances became in course of time a part of the religion of the community.

In this way during the Rig-Vedic time, the small daily sacrifices and the larger special sacrifices had been established as the practical religion of the Aryas. We have seen that the glory and greatness of the Indo-Aryan kingdoms was the result of the hearty fusion of the Aryas and the Indians and the evolving of a new life and culture with many new features suited to a period of advancing refinement and intellectual speculation. In the building up of those powerful dynasties, kings and priests and the people worked as one homogeneous community without racial distinctions or caste restrictions. They were one people. We also saw that peace and prosperity brought in their wake love of ease and enjoyment, laxity in morals, and considerable decline of the old simple religious spirit, particularly among the ruling class.

There is another dark side of the picture we have yet to see—the rise of a priestly caste called "Brahmans" and along with it all those superstitions, disintegration of society, cruel customs and soulless ritualism which have characterised priestly predominance in all countries, and which in India led ultimately to the loss of national freedom and the enslavement of the Hindu peoples. In the earlier period, every householder was his own priest, and only kings employed professional men or servants to perform the sacrifices. When prosperity increased and peace gave plenty of leisure, kings and rich men took pride in frequently celebrating sacrifices with the aid of priests, and the latter, taking advantage of the vanity of their patrons, developed the simple sacrificial rites into a complex system of rituals with feasting, music, drinking and other enjoyments, lasting sometimes for many days and months, and closing with the ostentatious presentation of rich gifts to the priests.

The Rishis who often acted as the palace priests of kings, cultivated the art of singing praises of their royal benefactors who in turn rewarded them with costly presents. Vasishta who sang about the great achievement of King Sudas was given 200 cows, 2 chariots, and 4 horses with golden trappings. The presents lavished on priests in later days when the Gangetic kingdoms were more opulent and powerful must have been correspondingly larger. Once King Janaka offered a prize of 1,000 cows with ten padas of gold fastened to each pair of horns to the most learned man of the assembly, and Yajnavalkya, Janaka's court priest, carried off the reward. It soon became a fashion with rich people to

display their status and wealth by performing sacrifices with the aid of priests. The mumber of sacrifices which a respectable householder had to perform as a religious duty was steadily increased by the priests. Thus every Arya had to perform in addition to the daily offerings, the fortnightly Sthalipaka, the Seven Grihya Sansthas and other special sacrifices such as Shula-gava, those for the birth of a son, for preventing disease or famine and so forth. For the bigger household sacrifices sometimes as many as sixteen priests were required. Every sacrifice and ceremony was invariably to be accompanied by gifts to the priests.

In this way the priest's vocation became the most lucrative profession of those days, and not unnaturally the priests began to form a separate class. They wanted to keep the profits as far as possibly in their own families and it became usual for the son to follow the father's profession. A class of hereditary priests thus came into existence. In the years of peace and luxury when there was no fighting to engage the energies of the rich, the sacrifices degenerated into social festivals for the display of pomp and wealth and priestly proficiency, not rarely accompanied by drunken revelry. "The priests took their seats on a beautiful swing; while it rocked dancing girls paraded their art to which music contributed its charms. The sacrificer took his seat in a large pavilion splendidly decorated—it was called heaven. The animals and treasures of the family were paraded. Obscene dialogues were allowed. Women and even the wives of the sacrificer were discussed. Dice was played. Boasting and quarrels

and threats to enemies were indulged in."* Priests made the sacrifices more and more demonstrative, complex and mystifying, and conducted classes to train pupils in sacrificial methods. The priests multiplied, their influence increased and their importance in society stimulated youths to follow their pursuits. Kings and rich men encouraged them with their favours and thus paved the way for their aggrandisement and supremacy.

When the larger sacrifices became a fashion and an obligation, the priests got a permanent place in society and influence in the life of the community, which they began to exploit without any scruples for their own advantage. Rules were soon promulgated making the employment of priests necessary and depriving the householder and the king of the right they had from immemorial days of sacrificing without a priest. The sacrificial ground became the legislative chamber from where the priests issued their sacrificial dicta and social laws. Priests began to claim for themselves and their rituals and Mantra superhuman powers competent to control the gods and bring down their grace. The superstitions of the people gave the priests ample opportunities to exploit them in numerous subtle and unscrupulous ways. "In the priest rests the whole sacrifice and the sacrificer in the sacrifice."† The fate of the sacrificer was thus said to be absolutely in the hands of the priests.

In another portion of the same Brahmana, the power of the priest and the necessity of propitiating him by bathing, clothing and feeding him and placing the women of the harem at his disposal are

*Pages 193—195, Vicissitudes of Aryan Civilisation in India, by M. M. Kunte.

†Aitreya Brahmana, II, 32.

described thus :- " Now about the office of a priest (Purohita). The gods do not eat the food offered by a king who has no house-priest. Hence, the king even when not intending to bring a sacrifice should appoint a Brahman to the office of the house-priest. . . . The Purohita (house-priest) who is deified as Agni Vaishvanara is possessed of five destructive fires; one of them is in his speech, one in his feet, one in his skin, one in his heart, and one in the organ of generation. With these powers which are burning and blazing, he attacks the king. . . ." By saying, " Where, O master, has thou been residing (for so long a time) ; the servants bring grass to him to sit, the king propitiates the destructive power which is in his speech. When they bring water for washing the feet, then the king propitiates the destructive power which is in his feet. When they adorn him, he propitiates by it, the destructive fire which is in his skin; when they satiate him with food, then the king propitiates the destructive fire which is in his heart. When he lives unrestrained in the king's premises, then he propitiates the destructive power which is in his organ of generation. If all the destructive powers which are in his body have been propitiated and he is pleased by the king's wish for sacrificing, he conveys him to the heaven-world and grants him royal dignity, bravery, a kingdom and subjects over whom he might rule. But should the king not do so, he will be deprived of all these gifts."*

The kings themselves had degenerated considerably and could not have felt any great difficulty in allowing the monstrous demands of the priests who thus got a permanent footing in the palace with

*Page 212, (Aitreya Brahman, VIII, 24.) *vide* M. M. Kunte.

power to control all religious ceremonies and free access to the harem. With the king and his wives in their pockets it was easy for them to dictate to the people. It was laid down that sacrificial gifts to the priests should be invariably of gold and never of silver, and the writers of the Brahmanas invented a story to justify their cupidity. Once when the Devas demanded from Agni (fire) the offerings deposited with him, he felt sad and shed tears, and the tears became silver. So if silver is given as Dakshina (gift) there will be weeping in the house. The priestly rules went to the extent of prescribing the portions of the slaughtered animals which the priests and others were entitled to get. The Purohita was to obtain the tongue, the neck and the shoulder of the cow or goat or horse as the case might be and plenty of liquor to drink.

The insiduous ways in which the priests threw their nets over the people may again be seen in the Satapatha Brahmana (II, 5-2-20) where the method of procuring confessions from the lady of the house regarding her misconduct with people other than her husband is described. " Thereupon the Prathiprastari returns (to the place where the sacrificer's wife is seated). When he is about to lead the wife away, he asks her, 'with whom holdest thou intercourse?' Now when a woman who belongs to one man carries an intercourse with another, she undoubtedly commits a sin against Varuna. He, therefore, asks her lest she should sacrifice with a secret pang in her mind; for when confessed, the sin becomes less, since it becomes truth, this is why he thus asks her. And whatever connections she confesses not,

that indeed will turn out injurious to the relatives."*

The Atharva Veda containing the secret Mantras and methods of sorcery and black-magic had been composed and had to be kept a perfect secret to be practised only by the priest initiated into the mysteries of the growing system of unscrupulous priestcraft. These were some of the reasons, attractions and temptations which induced young men to take up the profession of the Purohit, cling to it with zeal, clothe it with mystery and awe, develop it to a fine art of moral and intellectual exploitation of king and people alike, and in the end make it the secret monopoly, the exclusive privilege of a hereditary caste.

The really great Rishis were not the originators of this movement, but the large number of professional men to whom priestcraft had become a means of livelihood, of procuring wealth and power in society. For it is said the highest knowledge was not known to the Brahmans but only to the Kshatriyas from whom they learnt it. A Brahman priest came to the assembly of the Panchala King and there had a discussion with King Jaivali. The Brahman was defeated and came with protestations of sorrow and humility to learn the truth from the king. The king explained the truth and said, "This knowledge did not go to any Brahman before you, and therefore this teaching belonged in all the world to the Kshatriya class alone." The Bhagavad Gita also says that the teaching was known only to Raja Rishis (Chap. IV-2).

It is clear therefore that the motive of the priests in forming an exclusive caste was not any

*Page 262, History of Civilisation in Ancient India, Volume II, R. C. Dutt.

consideration of a religious or spiritual or racial nature but one of sheer greed for wealth, women and wine. The ridiculous extent to which they went on advocating their own unimpeachable divine greatness even so late as 100 A. D. may be seen in the Manu Smriti :—

"A Brahman is born to fulfil Dharma. Whatever exists in the world is the property of the Brahman. On account of the excellence of his origin, he is entitled to all. The Brahman eats but his own food, wears but his own clothes. All mortals subsist through the benevolence of the Brahman."

"Let a Brahman be ignorant or learned, still he is a great deity. To Brahman, the three worlds and the gods owe their existence. Thus though Brahmans employ themselves in all mean occupations, they must be honoured in every way, for each of them is a great deity."

"Let the king after rising early in the morning worship Brahmans who are well-versed in the threefold sacred sciences and learned in policy and accept their advice." (VII, 37)

"Brahman is the root of sacred law. By his origin alone he is a deity even for the gods and his word is authoritative for men." (XI, 85)*

"When a learned Brahman has found treasure deposited in former times he may take even the whole of it, for he is master of everything. When the king finds treasure of old concealed in the ground, let him give one-half to Brahmans and place the other half in his treasury." (VIII, 35, 39)

"Brahmans should not be taxed and should be maintained by the state." (VII, 133)

* Kelkar's History of caste.

A Brahman is allowed to marry four wives, a Kshatriya three wives, a Vaishya two wives and a Surda one wife only, according to Manu.

"The Brahmans are ready to take gifts, thirsty after drinking Soma, hungry of eating food and ready to roam about everywhere according to their pleasure. They formed a fraternity."* They formed a secret society perfecting plans to enslave the people in the coils of ritualism and superstition, practising deceptions, concocting tales and leading a life of indulgence in defiance of all decorum and morality. That was the beginning of the caste system among the Indo-Aryans. The person presiding at the sacrifice was usually called the Brahman, and the priests established themselves as a hereditary community of Brahmans.

This move of the Brahmans to establish a close corporation based on heredity could not have created any sensation at that time. Kingship had already become hereditary and probably some of the arts and crafts themselves were followed from father to son for generations. Nobody could foresee the tremendous consequences that followed the formation of "caste", of which they had no knowledge before. The kings could not anticipate that the Brahmans would soon become a rival political power and their machinations would lead to the destruction of the Kshatriya kingdoms, nor could the people see any danger to their own social independence in the priests' manœuvres. The priests themselves were proceeding step by step from one successful effort to another encouraged by the advantages they derived by the working out of their plans.

*Aitreya Brahmaṇa, VII, 29, page 201, *vide* M. M. Kunṭe.

There was also another strong motive in propounding the caste rules. The rising power of the Indians was a menace to the priests as well as the Aryan monarchs. Under the influence of the cultural contact with the Aryas, the Indian communities had derived a new impetus to progress and were beginning to distinguish themselves in philosophy, priestcraft and political influence. They had produced great Rishis and experts in Vedic lore and sacrifices. Independent rulers like Ravana and Bali were rivalling in their fame and power even the greatest of Indo-Aryan kings. Aryanised Indian kings and chieftains like Sree Krishna and the Pandavas were wielding immense influence with the people and eclipsing the Aryan monarchs by their power and splendour and wisdom. This new race of kings and people probably did not have that respect for Vedic sacrifices which the priests wanted to preserve for their own advantage. Some of the orthodox Aryan kings also must have felt uneasy about the increasing predominance of Indian rulers and supported the priests in their plans to suppress the Indians by caste laws and restrictions tending to keep them permanently outside the pale of Aryan religion and society and degrade them to the position of virtual slaves without rights of citizenship, as a class of Sudras, a new name now concocted by the priests. This purpose, the suppression of the masses by prohibiting them from all knowledge and status, is the dominant characteristic of all the caste rules framed at this time and during many centuries thereafter.

The Brahmans, like the Christian missionaries of a later age, were very often the first to penetrate

into the still unexplored regions of India and bring the peoples under their subjection. The stories connected with Hiranyaksha, Hiranyakashipu and Bali, which we shall have to explain in a following chapter, show how the Brahmans succeeded by their priestcraft and other tactics to bring those Indian kingdoms under their sway. In this process of expansion and exploitation the stupefying claims and pretensions of the priests to divine origin and superiority, and the theory of caste seemed to work wonderfully with the superstitious people of the South. The caste scheme was soon discovered to be a very effective instrument of domination and exploitation, for keeping the people ignorant in order to make them submissive, and for keeping them weak by increasing divisions and disunion among them. Therefore some of the kings must have helped the Brahmans in their efforts to promulgate and enforce caste distinctions and laws. The numerous Brahmanas of this period, the Sutras which came afterwards and lastly the Manu Smriti which is the final shaping of the Brahman-imposed social order have all as their keynote the preservation of the exclusive rights and privileges of the Brahmans, the prevention of all encroachments on these by other people, the perpetual subordination of all other communities to the Brahman, and above all the suppression of all efforts on the part of the Indians to rise in social status and religious learning which in those days meant all learning.

It was not to be expected that the other communities would passively submit to the dictation of the priests abrogating their liberties, and it took many centuries before the Hindu nation was completely

caught in the grip of caste. The Brahmans had therefore to start by enforcing their own exclusiveness from all other people by the internal discipline of the priestly class itself. Preventing inter-marriage was the most important thing, and with this motive they introduced child marriage and prohibition of widow marriage. Women then enjoyed great freedom and exercised a voice in the selection of their husbands. After they had grown mature, it was futile to compel them to give up their immemorial rights. The easiest thing, therefore, was to give away the girls in marriage before they were old enough to protest. There was a danger that on the death of their husbands, they might violate caste restrictions and marry outside the caste, if widow marriage were permitted. The Brahman lawmakers therefore decided that a widow should not marry and the most meritorious thing she could do was to burn herself with the dead body of her husband. Historians are agreed that widow marriage was permitted in ancient days and Sati was unknown.

"Rise up, woman, thou art lying with one whose life is gone, come to the world of the living, away from thy husband, and become the wife of him who holds thy hand and will be willing to marry thee."* Dr. Rajendralal Mitra in his paper on "Funeral Ceremony in Ancient India" says, "that the remarriage of widows in ancient India was a national custom can be established by a variety of proof and argument, the very fact of the Sanskrit language having from ancient days such words as 'Didhishu' (a man that has married a widow), 'Parapurva' (a woman that has taken a

* Rig-Veda X, 18-8.

second husband), 'Paunarbhava' (a son of a woman by her second husband) is enough to establish it." In order to justify the inhuman custom of Sati which the priests sought to impose upon their wives, they created a Vedic authority by misinterpreting a verse in the Rig-Veda. "There is a perfectly harmless passage (X, 18-7) which refers to a procession of women at a funeral ceremony. The passage may be translated : 'May these women not suffer the pangs of widowhood. May they who have good and desirable husbands enter their homes with collyrium and butter. Let these women, without shedding tears, and without any sorrow, first proceed to the house, wearing valuable ornaments.' There is not a word in the above relating to the burning of widows. But a word in it "Agre" was altered into "Agne" and the text was then mistranslated and misapplied in Bengal to justify the detestable custom of widow burning. In the words of Prof. Max Muller, "This is perhaps the most flagrant instance of what can be done by an unscrupulous priesthood. Here have thousands of lives been sacrificed and a fanatical rebellion been threatened on the authority of a passage which was mangled, mistranslated and misapplied."*

In religious matters and learning, women were degraded to the position of the Sudras. They were denied property rights and freedom. The priests had no scruples in thus crippling their own wives. People to whom the ladies of the king's harem no less than the wives of the ordinary householder, were easily accessible, could not have had any great respect for their own wives. This is not a mere

*Pages 110-111, Vol. I, History of Civilisation in Ancient India, R. C. Dutt.

conjecture. Until a few years ago, and perhaps even now in some places, the Brahmans of Malabar were considered to have a general right to enjoy any women they desired from among the non-Brahmans without involving any social impropriety. And the result is that even at the present day, the women of those Brahmans are the most pitiable victims of man's despotism and heartlessness. The result of all these priest-made rules was that the Brahman women were to remain as chattels of their husbands and to be destroyed when the latter died.

With these and similar rules, the Brahmans fortified themselves against intermingling by marriage or eating. To strengthen their hold on the minds of the people, they adopted many of the Indian gods and goddesses in their sacrificial system and connected them with Aryan deities. Thus we see that Indra was also called Arjuna. Rudra was given many appellations such as Girisha, Tamra, Nilakanta, Kapardin, Pasupati, Sankara, Siva, Isana, Mahadeva and others. The seven tongues of fire were deified as seven goddesses—Kali, Karali, Manojava, Sulohita, Sudhumarvarna, Sphulingini and Biswarupi. Goddesses like Daksha Parvati and Uma-Haimavati were also introduced. The story of Vishnu getting dominion over the whole world from Asuras was told in the Aitreya Brahman. Krishna is mentioned as a pupil of Ghora Angirasu in the Chhandogya Upanishad. The numerous gods and goddesses of the Indians were incorporated into the priestly system of mystic Mantras and secret rituals and gorgeous sacrifices intended to ensnare the people and keep them willing victims of priestcraft.

We shall now notice some of the provisions they

made for keeping the Indians permanently a subject people degraded like slaves and prevented from aspiring to rise to a higher status at any time in their lives.

"The tongue of a Sudra, who spoke evil about persons in the first three castes should be cut off. A Sudra who dared to assume a position of equality with the first three castes was to be flogged."*

A Sudra who abused a twice-born man or assaulted him with blows should lose the limb with which he offended; if he overheard a recitation of the Vedas molten lac or tin was to be poured into his ears; if he repeated the Vedas his tongue should be cut; and if he remembered Vedic hymns, his body was to be torn into pieces. †

Persons of the first three castes committing adultery with a Sudra woman were banished. A Sudra committing adultery with a woman of any of the three higher castes was to suffer death. ‡

Manu says that no collection of wealth was to be made by a Sudra even though he be able to do it, for a Sudra who has acquired wealth gives pain to Brahman, and that a Brahman may appropriate by force the property of a Sudra. §

If a Sudra mentions the names and birth of the twice born with contumely, an iron nail, ten fingers long, shall be thrust into his mouth.

If he arrogantly teaches Brahmans Dharma, the king shall cause hot oil to be poured into his mouth and ears. ||

"Let the king never slay a Brahman though he have committed all possible crimes." ¶

"The caste system had been completely organised

*Apastamba III, 10-27. † Gautama XII ‡ Apastamba. § X, 129. || Manu, 267-272. ¶ M. 379-81.

in the Rationalistic Period and threw an indelible stain on the criminal law of India. There was one law for the Brahman, another for the Sudra; the former was treated with undue leniency, the latter with excessive and cruel severity." *

"Thus Apastamba enjoins upon a king to punish those who have transgressed the caste laws even by death. . . . The caste regulations were thus enforced upon the people by terror of punishment both in this life as well as in the next." †

The Brahmans did not take long to realise that their claims and commandments could be enforced only if they had political power. They possessed plenty of wealth; their subtle influence with the people was greater than that of the king; they had abundant leisure; they had almost made a monopoly of all learning. They could therefore demand a hand in the exercise of the kings' authority. Already the palace priest had become a necessity. From the position of Purohit of the king to that of religious adviser and minister was an easy step. The Brahman became very soon the chief member of the king's council. "The increasing influence of the Brahman aristocracy began to have very important consequences both politically and socially. For not only did the Brahmans as experts in sacrificial lore obtain the respect due to religious teachers, but they also challenged the supremacy of the Kshatriyas, the political and military leaders, on the ground that the strict discipline of the mind and the body which was a fundamental principle of Aryan philosophy, was as indispensable for success in war and politics

*Page 47, Vol. II, *vide* R. C. Dutt. History of C. in A. I.

†Pp. 170-171, Corporate Life in Ancient India, R. C. Majumdar (1918).

as it was for the spiritual development of those who sought divine truth. The Brahman university became a school of arms and military tactics, diplomacy and political science, and just as Drona in the Mahabharata was the Brahman instructor of the Pandavas in the use of the bow and other weapons of war, so the Brahman diplomatist and politician became the chief among the ministers who formed the royal council."*

From that position of power, temporal as well as spiritual, the Brahmans began to enforce, in the name of the king and the country, one by one, those caste laws and religious ordinances, which were intended to keep the prince and the people alike servile to the priests. No doubt they very often served to check the autocracy of the kings and to ensure to the people government according to law; but the unhappy circumstance was that every curtailment of the king's power meant a tightening of the priest's grip, and the law of the country generally meant the priest-imposed caste laws with special provisions to exempt the Brahman from taxes and punishment and to inflict unjust restrictions and punishments on the Indian peoples. In the Mahabharata it is said that King Vena transgressed the rules of Dandanithi and therefore the Rishis killed him and put his son Prithu on the throne. Then the Brahmans and the gods said to him, "Rule the earth according to this law, without love or hate and even-handed towards all beings. Promise also that you will not punish the Brahmans and that you will prevent the intermixture of castes." Prithu promised to do so. The Brahmans and the

*Page 39, History of A. R. in India, by E. B. Havell.

gods accordingly gave him their best things."* What a hypocritical profession of justice! The king is compelled to rule even-handed, but also not to punish Brahmans! The king is to treat every one equally, but also to enforce upon them the indignities of caste gradations and punish them according to their castes.

We already saw that the whole people, including the king and the priests, were originally called the "Vis." When the Brahmans, and afterwards, the Kshatriyas, agreed to remain as exclusive hereditary groups, the bulk of the people forming the "Vis" were obliged to preserve their self-respect by similarly refusing to mingle with other communities. All the Indians who had not already mingled and become one with the "Vis" were called the Sudras, a class which did not exist in the Rig-Vedic days but was created as a result of Brahmanical rules. The process of fraternisation and fusion which had gone on for so many centuries with happy results was stopped and the forces of disintegration and mutual rivalry were let loose in the country. In the course of a few centuries, it became a fashion throughout the country to form exclusive social groups, and refuse association with others, on some pretext or other. Sometimes it was enmity with another group, sometimes it was a dispute between leaders, at other times it was the dignity of a rich family; again it might be a caste dispute;—no matter what the provocation or justification was, it became a pastime for ignorant people to set up claims of social priority or attribute social inferiority and break off into distinct, non-co-operating "castes." The Brahmans encouraged

*Page 191, Epic India, by C. V. Vydia.

these divisions, because every additional caste meant added strength to the caste system as a whole and greater security and influence for the presiding Brahman caste. The kings enforced these differences with merciless severity. This was the origin and course of development of the Hindu castes. We shall see in the following chapters the vicissitudes of this priest-imposed socio-religious feudalism.

No social or religious law can be established or long enforced without the sanction of the state, and it took many centuries of conflicts, machinations and persecutions before "caste" was finally recognised as the birthright and badge of servility of the Hindus. The peace and prosperity afforded by the Gangetic valley Indo-Aryan civilisation brought forth some of the glorious things in philosophy and science which India has contributed to the world, and also along with them those institutions of injustice and shame which throttled the nation to death. "It was under the same gentle but enervating influences that they also unconsciously lost all social freedom and were gradually bound down by unhealthy priest-imposed laws and restrictions which made further progress on the part of the people impossible. This is the dark side of Hindu civilisation. Priestly supremacy threw its coil round and round the nation from its early youth, and the nation never attained that social and political freedom and strength which marked the ancient nations of Europe."*

The crime of Brahmanism is not so much that it created an exclusive "caste," but that it condemned the non-Brahmans to perpetual subordination and disunion, not so much that it monopolised

* Page 228, Vol. I, History of Civilisation in Ancient India, R. C. Dutt.

religion and learning, but that it suppressed the intellectual and moral growth of the non-Brahmans, not so much that it exaggerated the rituals and sacrifices, but that it converted religion into a means of heartless exploitation. Brahmanism has, from its very inception down to the present day, meant the intellectual and moral starvation of the Hindu masses, the emasculation of the Hindu nation forced to live and die in an atmosphere of inferiority and disunion, and the submergence of all true religion in a flood of ceremonialism, and its prostitution for the exploitation of Hindu devotees.

Chapter V

KSHATRIYA-BRAHMAN STRUGGLE

In the early stage of Brahmanism, the kings were not much perturbed by the pretensions of the priests, and very probably some of the Aryan rulers actively patronised them. In so far as Brahmanism aimed at checking the growing power of Indian rulers and peoples by keeping them out of the Aryan pale, it must have appealed to some of the orthodox Aryan monarchs. King Dasaratha of Kosala was one of the prominent rulers who had accepted the Brahmanical creed. So long as the Brahmans kept to their sphere of religion and sacrifice, their audacious claims did not cause disturbance to the smooth working of the ancient royal houses, and Brahmans proved excellent ministers, advisers and diplomats.

But the ambition of the priests knew no limits. They wanted to dominate the whole of society, including the kings. Even before they began to

interfere with the political power of the warrior class, troubles arose because the Brahmans disputed the right of the Kshatriyas to officiate as sacrificial priests. "The fight between Vasishta and Viswamitra, described in the Vedas and in the Ramayana as well as the Mahabharata, represents the struggle between the priest and the warrior with regard to the tendency to restrict occupations to particular classes. It was a revolt by the Kshatriyas against the rising dogma that the son of a Brahman alone could perform priestly duties. Why could not the son of a Kshatriya be a priest? That was in effect the point of contention between Vasishta and Viswamitra."* The difference, therefore, first arose in the religious sphere, in the realm of learning and spiritual authority. It became the subject of warm discussion in the learned assemblies. As public matters are discussed in the newspapers in our own day, so were the Brahmanical theories made the topic of heated controversy between Kshatriyas and the Brahmans in the literature of the period. The priests composed the numerous Brahmanas to establish the validity of the Vedas and the sacrifices, the importance of the priest and the duty of all other classes to submit to the Brahman. The Kshatriyas opposed these doctrines by expounding some of the highest truths of philosophy that man has attained in any age or clime. They are embodied in the Upanishads.

"It will be observed that the second period was a period of the submission of the people under the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas, and of the submission of the Kshatriyas themselves under the Brahmans. At the close of the period, however, there appears to have been a reaction, and the proud Kshatriyas

*Page 56, Epic India, C. V. Vydia.

at last tried to shake off the galling yoke and to prove their equality with the Brahmans in learning and religious culture. Wearied with the unmeaning ritual and ceremonials prescribed by priests, the Kshatriyas started new speculations and bold enquiries after the truth . . . and these speculations remained as a heritage of the nation and formed the nucleus of the Hindu philosophical systems and religious revolutions of a later day. . . The bold speculations started by the Kshatriyas are known as the Upanishads."* Thus the rivalry started as a healthy reaction by earnest and thoughtful kings to the grotesque claims and pedantry and ceremonialism of the priests. The kings while conforming to the formalities dictated by their priestly advisers, began to dispute their value and truth and started those earnest soul-searching enquiries which have given us the wonderful Upanishads. Just as the Brahmanas depict the beginnings of the dark forces which in later centuries crushed the nation's life, so the Upanishads represent the glorious dawn of the intellectual freedom and spiritual aspirations of India to which even the greatest of modern thinkers pay their willing homage. That great German philosopher and thinker, Schopenhouer says about the Upanishads : "From every sentence deep, original and sublime thoughts arise, and the whole is pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit. Indian air surrounds us, and original thoughts of kindred spirits. . . . In the whole world there is no study, except that of the originals, so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Oupnekhat (Latin for Upanishads). It has been the solace of my life, it will

*Pages 12-13, Introduction to Vol. I, History of Civilisation in Ancient India, by R. C. Dutt.

be the solace of my death." *

The Brahmans claimed supremacy for the Vedas and maintained that sacrifices to the Vedic deities were the only means to divine grace and happiness in the life after death. The Upanishads speak, in glowing terms, of the Supreme Being, the All-Pervading Soul, the Universal Self from whom all the manifested universe has come forth, in whom it exists and in whom it will merge in the end. All the gods are manifestations of the Great Purusha or Brahma who is immanent in gods and men, high and low, learned and ignorant, in the Sudra, the Kshatriya and the Vaishya, no less than in the Brahman. By true knowledge of the Self alone can man attain the state of perfect truth, wisdom and happiness. He attains the highest state who by meditating on his own self recognises the Supreme God who is everywhere. This is the essential teaching of the Upanishads. It rises above the trammels of meaningless ceremonies to comprehend the Supreme, the Truth of all truths, the Life of all lives. King Janaka of Videha was the father of the Upanishadic movement. Learned men assembled in his court and held discussions, and the king rewarded them according to their scholarship. Brahmans, in those days, sat at the feet of Kshatriya kings to learn the highest wisdom which was known only to kings like Janaka. Owing to the exclusiveness of the Brahmans, the social position and sphere of influence of the two sections of the aristocracy became more and more defined and emphasised the rivalry which started in the learned assemblies. The Brahmanical rules involved considerable curtailment of the political and

*Page 302, Vol. II, History of Civilisation in Ancient India, R. C. Dutt.

social privilege of the Kshatriyas, in addition to the denial of the sovereign authority of the monarch. Even in the sphere of philosophy and religion, the Kshatriyas were not disposed to accept without reserve the authority of the priests; much less were they prepared to submit to any curtailment of their royal prerogatives and dignity. Moreover, the kings who were directly concerned with the problems of administration, war and peace, and had to hold their subjects together as leaders and protectors, were naturally more liberal in their outlook and had a greater sense of justice and equality than the priests, whose governing passion was the exploitation of the religious feelings of the people and assertion of a sacro-sanct status in society for themselves. The difference, therefore, went on widening and produced active opposition from the Kshatriyas when the Brahmans began to assert their influence in politics.

We have already seen how King Vena was killed by the Brahmans for violating the rule of Dandanithi and his son was placed on the throne after the exaction of a promise that he would not punish the Brahmans. The increasing power of the priestly class was becoming unbearable to the kings. The Brahmans were also consolidating their influence outside the Indo-Aryan society and had made settlements in the kingdoms of prominent Indian rulers, where also a similar process of subordinating the royal authority to that of the Brahman was being steadily pursued. The stories connected with the earliest Avataras (Incarnations) of Vishnu give us some clues as to what the Brahmans were accomplishing in those spheres. M. M. Kunte writes: "The

Brahmans doubtless acquired a great power over the Kshatriyas by means of constantly promulgating sacrificial dicta, and audaciously advancing claims to an origin directly from the supreme Brahman . . . the establishment and consolidation of their power as distinct from that of the Kshatriyas favoured their pretensions and enlarged the sphere of their ambition. The process of organising the aborigines and their leaders was developed. The son of Hiranyakasipu adopted the Aryan gods, the Aryan mode of life and Aryan thoughts and feelings. Prahlada was often asked by his father not to be denationalised and not to sympathise with the alien Aryas, the hereditary foes of their race and creed. Some Brahmans perhaps had laid a plot for secretly despatching the father of Prahlada who was to be helped in mounting the throne. The incarnation of Narasimha thus throws light on the politics of the Aryas, and especially of Brahmans during this period. The son brought under Aryan influences was encouraged to rebel against his father. The Aryas gave substantial aid to the son. The father was killed. . . . Prahlada was not treated justly. Promises made to him when he entered into a conspiracy with the Aryan intriguers against his father, were not kept. The aborigines mustered strong under his grandson Bali who also had adopted the Aryan civilisation. The Brahmans, assisted by thousands of the Aryas, intrigued against the power of Bali, whom his subjects often attempted to induce to wage war against the foreign settlers. The power of Bali was great, his preparations, political and military, bade fare to make him the leading sovereign of ancient India. In the growth

of his power the Aryas found a danger to their supremacy. At this time, the credulity of Bali was taken advantage of. A plot, the bearings of which cannot be realised, was laid. In the modern language of Europe, he was induced to sign a protocol, but was suppressed and supplanted. The paramountcy of the Aryas as led by the Brahmans was established. . . . The Brahman wielded the real power. Prahlada came to see the bearings of this political system for he seriously advised Bali to consider before he made up his mind to grant the request of Vamana. . . . Bali granted the request of Vamana and the Aryas under the leadership of the Brahman advisers triumphed. Bali was suppressed. Thus Hiranyaksha, Hirankasipu and Bali fell victims to the intrigues of Aryan politicians; not a drop of blood was shed, no war was waged. . . . But the Rajas did not like to be ruled by their Brahmanical advisers. They saw that the real power was with the intriguing Purohits, that they were mere tools in their hands. . . . The crisis came. Jamadagni, a Brahman of reputation, was at first insulted, and then killed, by an impulsive Kshatriya youth. Hundreds of Kshatriyas sympathised with the youth. In many places the Purohits were insulted. The political constitution of the Aryas was overthrown. Parasurama waged dreadful war against the Kshatriyas. The Brahmans triumphed."* Before many years passed, a strong Kshatriya king, Sree Rama, came on the scene, defeated the Brahman warrior Parasurama and re-established Kshatriya supremacy.

These developments, religious as well as political,

*Pages 248-50, Vicissitudes of Aryan Civilisation in India, M. M. Kunte.

had opened the eyes of the ruling class to the danger of allowing the Brahmans to go unchallenged. As we have seen, the first opposition took the form of refuting the teachings of the Brahmans and the efficacy of their rites. King Janaka was the leader of the intellectual revolt against Brahmanism. He had a daughter Sita. At the same time, King Dasaratha was an imbecile ruler and had meekly submitted to the authority of his Brahman advisers who managed everything according to the priestly laws. But Dasaratha's eldest son Rama was an independent prince, and even as a young student showed the spirit of revolt by disputing with his teachers. It was Sree Rama's searching questions which brought into existence that famous work of spiritual wisdom, the Yoga Vasishta. Its teachings are those of the Upanishads ; it has no faith in rituals and sacrifices ; and advocates the highest wisdom of Brahma Vidya. The Brahmans must have felt that Rama was not going to be a docile king like his father ; and what was worse Rama had gone and allied himself with the leader of the opposition to Brahmanism, King Janaka, by marrying his daughter Sita. This was too much. The Brahmans decided to prevent the accession of Rama to the throne and compelled King Dasaratha to banish his beloved son to the forests. Weak-minded Dasaratha soon died of grief.

After defeating Ravana, Rama came back as a great hero and conqueror. Even then the Brahmans did not give him peace. They insisted on his abandoning his alliance with Janaka by divorcing Sita. It was a complete victory for the Brahmans. Rama submitted to their dictation ; his life had been

made miserable by their machinations and he preferred, much against his own good sense, to victimise his queen to provoking another Brahman opposition. Peerless, adorable Sita was banished to the forest to satisfy the clamour of the priests. Another instance of Brahman domination over Rama may be noticed in the story of the Sudra whose head was cut off by Rama at the instance of the Brahmans for the offence of performing Tapas which Brahmans alone were entitled to perform. The king had thus become a puppet in the hands of the priests. Probably, Rama himself was not a pure Aryan ; he was black in colour. Anyhow, he was one of the earliest kings who for a time opposed and suffered very much from the Brahmans to whom he succumbed in the end.

Incidents like the above, the murder of King Vena, the slaughter of the Kshatriyas by Brahman Parasurama, the abject helplessness of Rama, the heart-rending fate of Sita, must have created deep suspicion and discontent among the Kshatriyas regarding the growing arrogance of the priests. The Kshatriya monarchs alone were unable to meet this powerful confederation of Brahman aristocrats, and when the rivalry ripened into a great war, Indian kings like Krishna and Arjuna championed the cause of the liberal party of Kshatriyas and crushed the orthodox party. It is the story of the final destructive war between the orthodox Kshatriyas under Brahman leadership and the liberal Kshatriyas backed by Indian kings, that is depicted in the Epic of the Mahabharata. As Mr. Dutt has remarked, "Every later poet and editor has contributed his mite towards enlarging, altering and distorting

the ancient epic ; every new sect has been careful to incorporate its new-fangled tenets in this national work." The Ramayana and the Mahabharata in the form in which we have them now were finally completed more than fifteen centuries after the events described in them took place, and many legends were added from time to time by numerous writers.

The bare outline of the historical facts may be picked up from the Bharata with great difficulty as follows : Owing to the rise of Brahman power, the Kshatriya kings had become divided into two parties—those who supported Brahmanism, and those who opposed it. A crisis was bound to arise, and the Brahman Drona started the conflagration. The Panchala king had insulted Drona, who therefore left his court and joined the Kurus. Living with the Kurus, who were pro-Brahman in their outlook, Drona quietly developed his plans for wreaking vengeance on the king of the Panchalas. It is said that the Pandavas were brought down from the Himalayas with their mother by a Brahman. They were, perhaps, Indian kings and warriors. Their marrying Draupadi as their common wife, a custom which did not prevail among the Aryas, confirms the suspicion that they were non-Aryas. The king of the Panchalas questioned Yudhishtra on the propriety of this marriage, but the latter replied that it was the custom in their tribe, and therefore not opposed to Dharma. So the Pandavas belonged to a different tribe. Drona brought down these chieftains as a preparation for his offensive against the Panchalas. When the military training of the princes was over, Drona demanded as the reward

of his tuition the help of the Kurus to attack the Panchalas who had insulted him. The request had to be acceded to. The Kurus attacked the Panchalas and annexed half of their kingdom. Not satisfied with this, Drona sent Arjuna disguised as a Brahman to win Panchala's daughter, Draupadi, whose choice of a husband had been proclaimed. The plan succeeded and Draupadi became the wife of the Indian chiefs. When so much had been accomplished, perhaps in fulfilment of a previous promise, the Pandavas had to be given a kingdom to set themselves up as rulers. The Kurus were not willing to go so far as that to please Drona, but were in the end compelled to yield and gave an unreclaimed forest region to the Pandavas. With the help of their leader Krishna, the Pandavas reclaimed the forest area, built a new capital city and soon became a great power rivalling the Kurus. The latter began to repent of having given a kingdom to the Pandavas, and advised by Drona, managed somehow to take it back from them and drive the Pandavas out after insulting their queen Draupadi. Quite naturally, the Pandavas now allied themselves with their relative, the Panchala king, and under the leadership of Krishna decided to take back their kingdom from the wicked Kurus. Great preparations were made by both sides. The real fight was between the two parties among the Kshatriya kings—the orthodox party led by the Brahman, Drona, and the liberal party led by the great Indian ruler, Krishna. The support of all the chief monarchs of the country was enlisted on one side or the other, because the fate of the whole nation was involved in this issue.

The decisive, but disastrous, battle of Kurukshetra

was fought, ending in the crushing defeat of the Brahmanical party and the victory of the national Indian party led by Krishna. The battle was truly fought for the inspiring principles which are embodied in the Bhagavad Gita, the essence of the philosophy of Indo-Aryan Kshatriyas and the national leaders as against the teachings of the Brahmans. A new era began in the history of India. The old order of things had vanished. The leadership of the country passed from the hands of Indo-Aryan kings into those of the rising Indian kings. The national party which stood for the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita for the co-operation of the Aryas and the Indians as brethren of the same motherland without distinctions of race or religion or caste came into power; and the line of orthodox monarchs who had, under the advice of Brahmans, prided themselves on being Aryan kings and tried to suppress the Indians and by establishing caste distinctions degraded them to a despicable position in society, came to an end. Rama, and more than Rama, Krishna came to be looked upon as the heroes of this national awakening who had championed the people's cause, and stories and legends grew around them. They were deified; they came to be considered as incarnations of God. In later centuries, when great Indian kings were ruling the country, to placate them and the people and gain their adherence to Brahmanism, the priests had to incorporate the stories of these national heroes in the religion of the Hindus.

The Mahabharata war had destroyed the power of the Indo-Aryan rulers. Kshatriya kings, warriors and nobles had died by thousands. Though the

Brahman party had been defeated, the Brahmans as a class suffered nothing. They kept out of the conflagration and were not affected in men or wealth. Their success did not depend on the results of the military struggle. They were interested only in setting one king against another, one party against another party, in keeping the Kshatriyas always fighting either among themselves or with Indian kings, and in this they succeeded until the Kshatriya power was practically annihilated. This was all that the Brahmans wanted. The opposition to Brahmanism came from the Kshatriyas who led the popular party and now that that opposition had almost disappeared, the way was opened for the unobstructed penetration of Brahmanism into all parts of the country, for the increasing vogue of sacrifices and rituals, and the submission of the kings and peoples to the serfdom of caste.

Chapter VI
BRAHMAN IMPERIALISM
(900—600 B. C.)

Though the scheme of caste hierarchy had not been generally accepted by the kings and the people, the priests had irrevocably separated themselves from the bulk of the community as the Brahman caste and developed their distinctive characteristics and interests and ideals which have from those ancient days down to the present always remained antagonistic to the progress of the nation as a whole. They claimed to be a superior race of men, by their very origin entitled to demand and enforce

submission from all other sections of society ; they asserted their right to the exclusive possession of all religious learning and leadership ; they contended that the worldly power of the king was subject to the spiritual authority of the Brahmans, and that in vital respects such as the liability to taxes and punishment they were to be exempted from the operation of the ordinary law of the land ; their religious practices and customs assumed a distinctive shape, and the sacred thread they began to wear always marked them off from the Indian peoples whom they treated with haughty contempt ; they held it was below their dignity to engage in the ordinary avocations of life such as agriculture, trade, arts and crafts.

In fact the Brahmans became a nation by themselves, interested in the religious and social domination and exploitation of the people of India. Their interests demanded, not the propagation of religion, but the keeping of it as a secret and a monopoly. The unification and education of the people became antagonistic to their policy, which demanded division into castes and submissiveness to the priestly authority, suppression of all aspirations to rise in culture and power, and encouragement of superstition for the profitable plying of priestcraft. It did not matter much to them who fought and won, and who ruled the country, whether they were Aryan kings or Indian rulers, or foreign conquerors. They sided with the party which favoured Brahman superiority and domination. Therefore, although the Mahabharata war was waged for the liberal ideals of the Bhagavad Gita as opposed to the orthodox creed of Brahmanism, and though it ended in a victory for the former,

it no less effectively served to destroy the power of the Kshatriyas, the leaders of the opposition to Brahmanism.

Within a few years of the passing away of Krishna and Arjuna, the country was thrown into a state of masterless confusion which opened the way for the aggrandisement of Brahmanism. India has hardly any history for the three or four centuries of darkness which followed the Great War. The happenings of that period are shrouded in oblivion, and what little light has penetrated through the gloom shows that the Brahmans were making capital of the situation and bringing the people under their domination. The Brahmans dispersed in all directions, partly because the monarchs who used to lavish rich gifts on them had passed away and partly because the weakening of the Kshatriya power had created greater opportunities throughout the country for the propagation of the Brahmanical cult of castes and sacrifices. The verbose and unwieldy Brahmanas were skilfully abridged into Sutras and schools were started in various places to train priests. Many portions of the country till then outside the Indo-Aryan influence came under the spell of Brahmanism. The kings who had survived the disastrous conflagration of Kurukshetra were not learned or powerful enough to stem the tide, and Brahmans became the inevitable leaders and advisers of the people. The caste rules were perfected and codified, and probably received the sanction of the rulers in many places. The Sutras which form the strongest links in the chain of caste were forged in this dark age, and when the Buddha lifted the gloom we find the people stooping under the yoke of

Brahman imperialism, steeped in the mire of ignorance, superstition and bloody sacrifices, their life blighted by the cruel exclusion from religion and citizenship.

The reaction did not take long to come. Like other imperialisms, Brahman domination accomplished its task of rousing the nation from its hypnotic sleep, and the great nation-wide upheaval started by the Buddha kept the whole country in its elevating influence for over one thousand years of glorious achievement in all departments of human activity—religion, literature, sciences and arts, industries, commerce, politics and international relations.

THE MENACE OF HINDU IMPERIALISM

[THE BUDDHIST PERIOD]

CHAPTER VII

THE DAWN OF INDIAN NATIONALISM

No greater injustice has been done to India than that unconsciously perpetrated by a large number of historians who have proclaimed to the world as characteristics of the national life and aspirations of the Indians exactly those forces, features and institutions which have, through ages, thwarted her national yearnings, and are even now, as they have been in the past, antagonistic to the unification, progress and liberty of the Indian nation.

The Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Institutes, the Epics and the Puranas and the institutions and customs which have developed through them are represented as embodying the spirit of the nation, while, as a matter of fact, they are the products of an imperialism which overwhelmed the country more than twenty-five centuries ago and from which she was extricated by the glorious national upheaval under the Buddha, but which, when India lost her political freedom, regained the upper hand and, with the help of other imperialists, finally enslaved the millions of India to the cruelest system of domination that any master nation has imposed upon a weak population in the annals of the civilised world. No

doubt, even the records of the worst days of the Company régime or the propaganda tracts of bigoted missionaries of the 19th century or the literature of Miss Mayo may disclose, in spite of their inimical and alien origin, some characteristics of the nation's life. In the same manner, the literary masterpieces of Brahman imperialism may also tell us through their grotesque legends and misrepresentations something of the nation's activities. But the Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Epics and the Puranas and histories based on them can no more speak of the inner workings of the nation's soul or the successes and failures which attended its efforts at self-expression, than the splendour of the Delhi Durbar or the tomb of Aurangzeb can express the spirit and aspirations of the people of India.

Even that noble and stalwart champion of India's right to Home Rule, Mrs. Annie Besant, was led to believe that "It is on this literature and on the past embodied in it that the foundation of Indian nationality is indestructibly laid." The pathetic truth, however, is that national revival in India has, from the earliest centuries of Rama and Krishna, down to the present day, invariably manifested itself as a revolt against the spirit and influence of this anti-national literature and its patrons. In the Upanishads, we have the first bold beginnings of that protest, and in the Mahabharata War the desperate though successful struggle of the nation's heroes to redeem the country's honour from the hands of exploiting priests, the champions and inventors of that literature. The next glorious dawn of national life, which came after a period of darkness under cover of which the imperialists had

fastened their chains on the necks of the people, was also characterised by a more fruitful opposition to the so-called sacred literature of the priests. In the present chapter, we are concerned with this second great protest of the nation against Brahman domination. In the succeeding chapters, it will become clear that later national awakenings have also been rebellions against the same imperialism of the Epics and the Puranas.

Till the Mahabharata War, the politically dominant people were the Indo-Aryans, and the only dangerous opposition was the rivalry of the Brahmans. The destruction of the Indo-Aryan kingdoms which was effectively achieved by that war brought the Aryanised Indian rulers into power, but it took some more centuries before the nation as a whole was able to assert itself against its exploiters. In the interval between the collapse of the Kshatriya power and the emergence of an inspired nation the priests had exerted their utmost efforts and had succeeded in establishing their power in the land more securely than before. To overthrow this Brahmanical subjection was the compelling motive of the leaders of the national movement.

Hereafter we do not hear of the Aryas. They mixed their blood and culture with those of the Indians and disappeared from the political arena. The rulers who succeeded them might have been Kshatriyas or Sudras or Brahmans but were all Indians and not Aryas. The great teachers and geniuses are all Indians, no doubt, with the heritage of the Aryan past in their veins. The two competing forces of the country, hereafter, are Indian Nationalism and Brahman Imperialism, until both fall

under foreign Imperialists. The history of India from 600 B. C. is the history of the vicissitudes of the struggle between these two forces, which forms the under-current of all the social, religious and political revolutions that have passed over the country. We shall briefly recapitulate the main achievements of Brahmanism as they stood in 600 B. C. It will help us to realise the character of the national awakening and the nature of the subjection which it sought to overthrow.

1. The country was parcelled out into a congeries of petty kingdoms and tribes independent of one another and some of them had no kings. As they had no unifying common interest, they frequently quarrelled among themselves.

2. Brahmans had established themselves as the chief advisers, ministers and priests of the rulers and as the learned leaders of the people all over the known country, and brought the kings and their subjects alike under the caste-regime with the Brahman as its supreme symbol and the Brahmana Sutras as the binding common law.

3. The Aryanised Indians who formed one homogeneous community and used to mingle freely with the Indians were now divided into Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, and all the Indians were maliciously kept out of all rights and privileges and reduced to the position of slaves as Sudras.

4. Religious learning, which meant all learning, had almost become a monopoly of the Brahmans.

5. Bloody and costly sacrifices, and gifts to the Brahmans had become the essence of the religion of the first three classes; and the fourth class of Indians were stoutly denied all the consolations of religion.

6. Rulers, rich men, and Brahmans married many wives, led luxurious lives and indulged in drinking the liquor of Soma and in eating all varieties of meat.

7. The civil and criminal laws had been codified by the Brahmans in accordance with caste principles and were enforced with cruel brutality on the Indian masses.

8. Domestic slavery was common and sometimes women were sold in public markets.

9. The country was divided by the Brahmans into three circles, (*a*) the Arya Varta of the highest purity, (*b*) the southern districts of the lowest purity, and (*c*) the regions of intermediate purity, and travelling outside the Aryavarta was declared to cause pollution requiring propitiation and expiation by sacrifices and ceremonials.

In fact, everything had been done that could possibly be done to subordinate the king to the priest, to divide the united community into non-co-operating castes, to keep the Indians in degradation and subjection, suppressing their intellectual, religious and political aspirations, to prevent the association of people in different parts of the country, to stop the progress of learning outside the Brahmanical fold, to impose expensive sacrificial duties on the householder for the profit of the priests and to legitimatise the licentious enjoyment of women, meat and wine by Brahmans and rich men; in short religion and the State were so organised that the mass of the people were condemned to live as helpless victims for the free exploitation of the Brahmans and their partisans. This iniquitous system soon degraded the Brahmans themselves. " As a community they

became grasping and covetous, ignorant and pretentious, and the Sutra-Karas themselves had to censure the abuse in the strongest terms." When the Greeks came to India, there were two classes of Brahmans, the philosophers and the politicians. As for the philosophers, after living in the city for a number of years, "each individual returns to his own property where he lives the rest of his days in ease and security. They then array themselves in fine muslin, and wear a few trinkets of gold in their fingers and their ears. They eat flesh, but not that of animals employed in labour. They abstain from hot and highly seasoned food. They marry as many wives as they please."*

"Not only had the Brahmans become an organised intellectual force which asserted for itself the leading position in political affairs hitherto held by the Kshatriyas, but in ministering to the religious needs of the Indo-Aryan community at large, they had established a monopoly which lent itself to unscrupulous exactions and to the encouragement of the grossest superstitions." . . . "So long as Brahmanhood depended in the first instance upon the accident of birth it would obviously fail in its purpose and the influence exercised by unscrupulous or ignorant priests was bound to encourage superstition among the masses, and to become a hindrance to civilisation as well as a source of exaction and cruelty."

"Another instrument of tyranny and deception placed in the hands of the Brahmans was the Aryan belief in the divine power of sacrifice which had come down from the earliest Vedic times. In the course of many centuries the performance of sacrificial rites had grown into a fine art, which the

*Pages 78-79, History of Civilisation in Ancient India, Vol. II, R. C. Dutt.

Brahman experts were not slow to use for their personal advantage, for the efficacy of the sacrifices was said to depend largely upon the liberality of the indispensable Dakshina or reward bestowed upon the officiating priests and their servants . . . and not only did public sacrifices and the worship of tribal deities involve a vast expenditure of state revenues, but the household rites for which the services of Brahmans were generally necessary grew more and more numerous and complicated. Some of the great state ceremonies, such as the king's consecration and the horse sacrifice performed to secure victory and the welfare of the kingdom absorbed the whole attention of the court functionaries for over a year, required the attendance of thousands of Brahmans and a corresponding bountiful distribution of largesse besides inordinate feasting and wholesale slaughter of animals."

"The due fulfilment of domestic sacrificial rites was equally onerous for the Aryan householder. Besides the ordinary daily rites at which the householder himself presided there were endless sacrificial ceremonies which required the attendance of Brahman experts. There were sacrifices for obtaining male offspring; birth sacrifices which had to be repeated every month; sacrifices of feeding, naming, piercing the ears, shaving the head, and investiture with the sacred thread; and numerous others connected with ordinary daily events or with marriage and death ceremonies. The indiscriminate slaughter of animals and the free indulgence in the intoxicating juice of the Soma plant associated with Vedic ritual involved the tacit recognition by the Aryan priesthood of many bloody and obscene orgies of the

uncivilised non-Aryan tribes, in which human victims were frequently sacrificed."* Thus not only the Indians, but also the warrior and merchant classes had fallen victims to unrelenting priestcraft. "The oppression of Brahmanism made the people sigh for a revolution and the work of the philosophers opened the path to such a revolution."†

At this stage, Kapila began his opposition by propounding the Sankhya philosophy, the chief object of which was to relieve mankind from all pains bodily, mental, natural and divine. He declared the Vedic rites were inefficacious as they were impure and tainted with slaughter of animals, and that by true knowledge alone could complete emancipation be attained. He prepared the way for Buddhism. "It was in fact found easy to develop out of the Sankhya those very elements of universal religion which it failed of positively offering. Its intellectual criticism was the condition and germ at once of the purest theism and the most practical humanity in oriental history; of lessons in life and worship which Christendom cannot afford to despise or ignore . . . it issued in the pure democracy and boundless brotherhood of Buddhism—a gospel of mercy for all." (Samuel Johnson of America.)

The people had sunk into such deplorable depths of superstition and indulgence that a great spiritual leader was necessary to lift them up and open their vision to the consolations of a virtuous life as distinct from the false hopes derived from cruel rituals. It was the gradual submission of the ruling class to the creed of the priests that had brought the whole of

*Pages 46—48, Aryan Rule in India, by E. B. Havell.
†Page 16, History of Civilisation in Ancient India, by R. C. Dutt.

society to its knees; and a teacher competent to influence and rouse the kings could alone have succeeded in altering the situation. Such an inspired saviour appeared in Lord Buddha from among the royal class itself, and succeeded in restoring to the nation its capacity to feel and think and act untrammelled by the myths of priestcraft.

The Buddha came from among the Indian clans, was heir to the throne of an Indian king, had mastered the philosophy and religion of the Brahmans and could meet the best scholars in argument, and above all, by many years of austerity and meditation, not only realised the futility of the prevailing religious practices but acquired that soul-illumination which gave authority to his new teachings. His message penetrated into the hearts of kings and peasants, Brahmans and Sudras, in its all-embracing love for man. He helped the degraded commoner to feel that he too counted in the world and could rise to the highest spiritual happiness. Caste differences no longer stood in the way of his progress. The Buddha proclaimed the one humanity which united all, and the consolations of his religion were accessible to every one without distinction of high and low. He invited the poorest and the lowliest to live and learn with princes and merchant-millionaires and proud Brahmans in the brotherhood of his Order. The humble craftsman or barber could rise to be a philosopher and teacher in the noble scheme of the Buddha.

One of the most tolerant of teachers the world has ever produced, the Buddha did not hesitate to make clear his desire to save the nation from the untruths of priest-ordained life. His mission was a

distinct protest against the exploiting, imperialistic character of the Brahman religion of castes and ceremonials. That protest was expressed as (1) a disregard of the Vedas and their rituals, (2) disregard of the iniquitous caste system, and (3) disregard of the aristocrats' Sanskrit language in favour of Pali, the language of the people. There was nothing revolutionary in his simple teachings, but he had cut asunder the mill-stone of inferiority which hung on the neck of the people, preventing them from looking up to things good and noble. They became free to aspire and strive for the highest things of this world. The scales fell off their eyes and they could see as the Brahmans and Kshatriyas were seeing. They ceased to be Dasyus, Rakshasas, Mlechhas, Vanaras or Sudras, and became equal citizens of the exalted kingdom of righteousness. They were no longer slaves, but free men—free to know and believe in the most sacred things, free to lead the most honourable life, and free to express that life in all the multitudinous ways of arts and sciences, literature and administration ; and in the course of a few centuries a free people commenced to enrich the world with their abundant achievements in all the domains of civilisation and enterprise. The Buddha's religion is the national religion of India ; the Buddhist age is the age of Indian nationalism ; the Empire of Asoka is the crowning success of India's freedom.

Though the national renaissance took the form of a protest against Brahmanism, it should not be supposed that all Brahmans kept aloof from the regenerated life of the country. On the other hand many of them entered whole-heartedly into the current of national life and helped to direct it along

very useful channels of constructive thinking and planning. They co-operated in making the national life richer in all its aspects. As prominent disciples of the Buddha, as ministers of kings, as poets and astronomers and grammarians, they vied with other people in serving the motherland and embellishing her with the best things they could produce. Buddhism was never known to have persecuted the Brahmans. On the contrary, the Buddha and the great Buddhist kings who followed him lavished their favour and patronage and gifts unstintingly on the Brahmans along with the Buddhist monks. That ardent apostle of Buddhism, Asoka, mentions in his edicts Brahmans first and then only monks as deserving of care and honour.

The opposition was therefore not to the individuals who formed the community of Brahmans, who were learned and led good lives, but to the system of exactions and superstitions which the professional priests had built up for their aggrandisement. The existence of a steadily growing class of hereditary priests, as a community distinct from the rest of the population, disdaining to live like their brother-compatriots, with exclusive vested interests which were opposed to the freedom and elightenment of the people could not but be a stumbling block to all popular aspirations. Their self-assumed segregation from the normal life of the community imposed upon them the necessity of developing their separate plans to dominate positions of power, prestige and profit even at the sacrifice of the commonweal. At every stage of the nation's progress, it had, therefore, to overcome this inevitable obstacle before any advance could be made, and even in the best days

of peace and prosperity, there was alway present the danger of subversion of power by hostile Brahman parties who showed no scruples in making use of the Greek, the Scythian, the Arab, the Chinaman, the Rajput or the Moghul, whoever served their purpose, to overthrow kings and dynasties who did not support Brahmanism. During the centuries that followed the Mauryan emperors in the mysterious rise and fall of dynasties, the successive invasions which destroyed in the end the ability of the country to protect itself, the repeated reconquests and campaigns by successive kings desirous of celebrating the horse-sacrifice, the compilation of new Dharma Sastras, the schism in the Buddhist Order, the emergence of a new religion of temples and idolatry, in fact in all important movements, beneath the superficial play of events, will be found the subtle working of an intellectual community wielding deadly powers for good and evil, but most often using them for the latter, for their own self-assertion, though it involved the ruin of the nation.

CHAPTER VIII

INDIA'S NATIONAL RELIGION

Buddhism is the national religion of India because the Buddha was an Indian, descended from an Indian king of the Sakya clan ; because Buddhism was the source and inspiration of the national awakening witnessed in the Indian empires and kingdoms which controlled the destinies of the country for over a thousand years ; because Buddhism, for the first time, united India in a common cultural

synthesis and organisation; because unlike Brahmanism, which was the religion of the privileged classes, Buddhism was the first religion of the common people, not forced on them, but accepted by their free will and pleasure; because Buddhism brought out in the fullest measure the immense potentialities of the nation in all its manifold aspects—science and art, literature and religion, commerce and industry, internal progress and international reputation; and lastly, because no other religion has till this day been able to make India a great nation as Buddhism did.

In the sixth century before Christ, the Buddha was born as the only son of the king of the Sakyas in a place near Kapilavastu. He was married at the age of about eighteen. Ten years after his marriage, he renounced the life of luxury and power, and the love of dear ones, and went out as a homeless wanderer in quest of truth and the path of deliverance from all suffering. He studied from Brahman teachers all that their religion and philosophy could offer but did not obtain what he sought. He, therefore, took to the life of Tapas or austerities and self-mortification to see if it would give him superhuman insight and power. The penances did not take him any nearer to the goal of his heart which was sorrowing for suffering humanity. The traditional methods of salvation and spiritual power had failed to illumine his soul. So he abandoned the austerities of asceticism and wandered about bewildered and tormented by conflicting thoughts, until one day, sitting in meditation, he saw the veil of doubt and mystery vanish; his soul was filled with the effulgence of a realisation—the realisation that a holy, pure and

simple life of universal love was the way to Nirvana or freedom from all suffering. He had found peace in the extinction of all passions, and set out to the city of the Kasis, as he said, " to beat the drum of the immortal in the darkness of the world."

His very first teachings in Kasi were to the following effect : " There are two extremes, O Bhikkus, which the man who has given up the world ought not to follow—the habitual practice, on the one hand, of those things whose attraction depends upon the passions, and especially of sensuality, a low and pagan way, unworthy, unprofitable and fit only for the worldly minded ;—and the habitual practice on the other hand, of asceticism, which is painful, unworthy and unprofitable.

" There is a middle path, O Bhikkus, avoiding these two extremes discovered by the Tathagata (the Buddha)—a path which opens the eyes and bestows understanding which leads to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to Nirvana."

Within a few months of his arrival at Benares, Gautama had sixty followers. And now he called them together and dismissed them in different directions to preach the truth for the salvation of mankind. " Go ye now, O Bhikkus, and wander for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, for the welfare of gods and men. Let not two of you go the same way. Preach, O Bhikkus, the doctrine which is glorious in the beginning, glorious in the middle, glorious in the end, in the spirit and in the letter; proclaim a consummate, perfect and pure life of holiness." (Mahavagga I-ii,1).

"No missionaries of later days have evinced a holier zeal to proclaim the truth to the ends of the earth than the followers of Gautama."

"He, as well as his disciples, rises early when the light of dawn appears in the sky, and spends the early moments in spiritual exercises, or in converse with his disciples, and then he proceeds with his companions to the town. In the days when his reputation stood at its highest point, and his name was named throughout India among the foremost names, one might day by day see that man before whom kings bowed themselves, alms-bowl in hand, through streets and alleys, from house to house, and without uttering any request, with downcast look, stand silently waiting until a morsel of food was thrown into his bowl." (Dr. Oldenberg.)

Thus for forty-five years, Gautama wandered through the Gangetic Valley, preached benevolence and a holy life to the poor and the lowly, made converts among the high and the low, the rich and the poor, and proclaimed his law throughout the length and breadth of the land."

The essence of Buddhism is contained in the Four Truths and the Eightfold Path :

"This, O Bhikkus, is the *Noble Truth of Suffering.* Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering ; presence of objects we hate is suffering, not to obtain what we desire is suffering. Briefly the fivefold clinging to existence (*i.e.*, clinging to the five elements) is suffering.

"This, O Bhikkus, is the *Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering* : Thirst that leads to rebirth accompanied by pleasure and lust, finding its delight here and there. (This thirst is threefold,) *viz.*, thirst for

pleasure, thirst for existence, thirst for prosperity.

"This, O Bhikkus, is the *Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering* : It ceases with the complete cessation of thirst—a cessation which consists in the absence of every passion, with the abandoning of this thirst, with the doing away with it, with the deliverance from it, with the destruction of desire.

"This, O Bhikkus, is the Noble Truth of the Path which leads to cessation of suffering. That holy Eightfold Path, *viz.*—

Right Belief,
Right Aspiration,
Right Speech,
Right Conduct,
Right Means of Livelihood,
Right Exertion,
Right Mindfulness,
Right Meditation. (Mahavagga 1-6)

In other words, right knowledge and convictions must be acquired by study and meditation; noble aims and high aspirations must serve as the guiding star of life ; speech must be characterised by love, and truth and gentleness; conduct should be harmless, unselfish, helpful and upright; a proper means of livelihood, agreeable and elevating, useful to oneself and others, must be found out and pursued; life must be one unceasing effort to grow in virtue, to relieve suffering and to do good; we must be always alert, earnest, enthusiastic and hopeful; an atmosphere of peace, contentment and tranquil courage must pervade our whole life. Such is the Eightfold Path of discipline and self-culture which would enable one to subdue the passions and the thirst for life.

"A more beautiful picture of life was never conceived by poet or visionary; and a more perfect system of self-culture was never proclaimed by philosopher or saint."

"There is no suffering for him who has finished his journey and abandoned grief, who has freed himself on all sides, and thrown off all fetters."

Nirvana is something which can be attained here in this life: "it is the sinless calm state of mind, the freedom from desires and passions, the perfect peace, goodness and wisdom, which continuous self-culture can procure for man."

The Buddha emphatically ignored caste. "For whoever amongst men lives by cow-keeping, know this, O Vasishta, he is a husbandman, not a Brahman.

"And whoever amongst men lives by different mechanical arts . . . is an artisan, not a Brahman.

"And whoever amongst men lives by trade . . . is a merchant not a Brahman"

"And whoever amongst men lives by theft . . . is a thief, not a Brahman."

"And I do not call one a Brahman on account of his birth, or of his origin from a particular mother—he may be called Bhupati, and he may be wealthy—but the one who is possessed of nothing and seizes upon nothing, him I call a Brahman."

"The man who is free from anger, endowed with holy works, virtuous without desire, subdued and wearing his last body, him I call a Brahman."

"The man who like water on lotus-leaf, or a mustard seed on the point of a needle, does not cling to sensual pleasure, him I call a Brahman." (Vasistha Sutta)

The order of monks he established welcomed all

without distinction of caste. "As the great streams, O disciples, however many they may be—the Ganga, Yamuna, Asiravati, Sarabhu, and Mahi—when they reach the great ocean lose their old name and their old descent, and bear only one name—the great ocean—so also do Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vysias and Sudras lose their distinctions when they join the order."

"For the first time in the history of the world, it proclaimed a salvation which each man could gain for himself, and by himself, in this world, during this life, without any, the least, reference to God or gods, either great or small.

There are five commands which all Buddhists should observe :—

1. Let not one kill any living being.
2. Let not one take what is not given to him.
3. Let not one speak falsely.
4. Let not one drink intoxicating drinks.
5. Let not one have unchaste sexual intercourse.

Those laymen who want to lead a specially pious life should observe three more rules :—

6. Let him not at night eat untimely food.
7. Let him not wear wreaths or use perfumes.
8. Let him lie on a bed spread on the earth.

All Bhikkus should observe the above eight and in addition two more disciplines :—

9. To abstain from dancing, music, singing, and stage-plays.
10. To abstain from the use of gold and silver.

The moral maxims of the Buddha appeal to the noblest feeling of man.

"Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love ; this is its nature."

"Let us live happily, not hating those who hate us. Among men who hate us, let us live free from hatred."

"Let one overcome anger by love, let him overcome evil by good; let him overcome the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth." (Dhammapada).

"Not to commit sin, to do good, and to purify one's mind, this is the teaching of the Buddhas."

"Thus he lives as a binder together of those who are divided, an encourager of those who are friends, a peace-maker, a lover of peace, impassioned for peace, a speaker of works that work for peace."

All the above quotations are from the "Buddhist Age-Civilisation of," by R. C. Dutt.

Wherever the Buddha's teachings spread, they created a revolution in the mentality of the people. Liberated from the artificial restrictions of caste, they delighted to mingle their thoughts, activities and destinies in the free flow of human friendships, attachments and love, and many Brahmans even broke through their orthodoxy to share in this new freedom. "The Jatakas mention many instances of different degrees of intimacy between the Brahmans, burghers and princes, and even the lower classes culminating even in inter-marriages or sending sons to the same teacher for education.

(1) "A king marries a rustic woman on account of her decency. (2) A king being defeated by rebels finds a hospitable shelter with a poor countryman and rewards his benefactor with the half of his kingdom. (3) A king marries an ascetic's daughter. (4) There is a marriage between a queen and her priest's son. (5) The son of a poor woman of a caravan, a merchant's son and the son of a tailor in the employ

of the merchant, all grew up together and by and by went to Takshasila to complete their education. (6) A Brahman's daughter is married by the king. The free love of the times expressed itself in the following strain: Whomsoever the lover loves be it a low Chandali, all are alike; in love there is no unlikeness." *

The Brahmans too began to take to all sorts of professions like the other members of society and the Jatakas mention many instances. "We read of Brahmans as physicians, goat-herds, merchants, hunters, snake-charmers, archers, and the servant of an archer who was formerly a weaver, low caste trappers, and even cartwrights." The universal popularity which the new religion attained even during the life-time of its founder may be seen in the active part women took in fostering its development. "The stupendous munificence which met the Buddhist Order at every step proceeded in great measure, perhaps in the greatest measure, from women of whom the typical representative was the honourable matron, Visakha, a rich citizen commoner at Savatthi, who made the first liberal preparations on a large scale to provide for the Buddha's disciples who came to Savatthi the chief necessaries of life. She thus spoke to Buddha to obtain his permission for this: "I desire as long as I live, sire, to give the brotherhood clothes for the rainy season, to give food to stranger monks who arrive here and to give food to monks who are passing through, to give food to sick brethren, to give food to attendants on the sick, to give medicine to the sick, to distribute

*Page 62, Local Government in Ancient India, by Radhakumud Mukerjie.

a daily dole of cooked rice, to give bathing dress to the sisterhood of nuns."*

The Order founded by the Buddha was the first monastic order known to the world and no other missionary order evinced a holier zeal to spread righteousness far and wide and serve mankind. The torch of truth and brotherhood as well as of learning and science, was carried to distant lands, kindling, as it went, fresh beacons of religious inspiration and wisdom which made India the Spiritual Mother of humanity.

Chapter IX

THE GLORY OF THE NATIONALISTIC PERIOD

600 B. C.—800 A. D.

The national upheaval which came in the wake of the Buddha's teachings brought such vast continents and so many millions of people under its inspiration and influence and guided their destinies for so long a time even in India, whence it subsequently disappeared, that it is impossible to give a conception of its magnitude and myriad features in the space of a few pages. We have to be contented with a few broad hints about some conspicuous manifestations in the general life of the Indian community.

The course of Buddha-inspired nationalism was not one of triumphant progress at any time, but was in the teeth of perpetual opposition by the powerful aristocracy of the country, the Brahmans,

*Page 169, Buddha—Oldenberg.

opposition which could not appear with any decency when the entire population was bowing before the Great Buddha of perfect goodness, opposition which dared not raise its head when the Emperor Asoka held the world in admiration and reverence by the greatness of his love for humanity no less than the greatness of his empire, but opposition which, almost at every other stage, hung like a Damocles' sword over kings and dynasties and did on many occasions fall on its victims with deadly effect. The vicissitudes of that nation-wide regeneration were numerous indeed. Like the ebb and flow of the mighty ocean, it prevailed against its impediments for long and brought out of its fathomless store many a pearl of rare beauty and value, before it receded into other lands to fructify their evolving life.

600 B. C. to 800 A. D. was roughly the period when Buddhism continued to shape the policy of Indian rulers and the ideals of Indian people, and, even in the years of its frequent subjection to rival forces, it kept on stirring the nation's heart with varying fortunes. Great kings and emperors like Chandragupta, Asoka, Vikramaditya, Harsha and Kanishka made their epoch-making contributions to history and civilisation in this period. Politicians and poets, astronomers and architects, philosophers and physicians, men of the highest distinction in all fields, such as Patanjali, Sri Sankaracharya, Kautilya, Aryabhatta, Charvaka, Susruta, Kalidas, Amarasimha, Vararuchi, Bharavi, Varahamihira, Dandin, Banabhatta, Subhandu, Bhartirhari, Bhavabhuti and others, who are even now the prevailing authorities and models of Hindu India, flourished in this age.

The national awakening was marked by the

nation's monumental achievements in architecture, sculptures, sciences and arts, literature and politics, trade and industry, no less than in the religion of "mercy for all." Kapila's Sankhya prepared the way a short time before the Buddha by blasting the rock of orthodoxy and superstition with the dynamite of bold, rational thinking. Patanjali's Yoga raised man out of his petty subjection to imaginary deities and held out limitless possibilities of spiritual progress by self-culture. The Nyaya and Vaiseshika schools served to strengthen the rational spirit and the two Mimamsaka systems produced little effect on the rising tide of free thinking, though all the systems, by their exhaustive complexity and variations, together contributed to give a sort of universal impulse to the new life of the country. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata with the Bhagavad Gita were finally composed, and many of the important Puranas were completed. The Dharma Sastras received their finishing touches. Sree Sankaracharya raised the philosophy of the Upanishads to its highest eminence and made Advaitism the soul of Indian metaphysics.

"Buddhism in Southern India, as in the North, favoured the growth of a vernacular literature and it is to the early centuries of the Christian era, when Buddhism and Jainism were flourishing in the South, that scholars generally assign the classical works of Tamil literature, of which the Kurol of Tiruvalluvar is a typical masterpiece."* India's religion and culture and national life reached the highest level in this period and afterwards there was no progress in any of these directions.

*Page 237, Aryan Rule in India, by E. B. Havell.

We shall discuss a few examples to explain some of the distinguishing characteristics of the revival which found in Asoka its most illustrious leader. No greater prince had reigned in India since the Aryans first colonised this country, and no succeeding monarch surpassed his glory. His claims to greatness rested not so much on the extent of his empire, as on the noble ideals which inspired his administration at home and his cultural relations abroad, and the righteous devotion to truth and service which have made his name honoured in all parts of the globe. No other monarch has exerted greater influence on the progress of mankind by his fervour for relieving suffering, doing good and increasing righteousness. Asoka's edicts show that though he was a Buddhist, his intentions were so exalted that he soared above all distinctions of religion or sect or nationality. His moral inculcations were such as would be acceptable to all, his officers of righteousness worked among all peoples and his benefactions extended to foreign countries.

"Asoka's great object in publishing his edicts was to preach and promote righteousness amongst his subjects. Dharma or righteousness consists, as said by him in the second pillar edict, (1) in doing no ill, (2) in doing good, (3) in sympathy, (4) in beneficence, (5) truth, and (6) purity. In the seventh edict he adds, (7) gentleness, and (8) saintliness. Besides this he prohibited the killing of animals for religious sacrifices and was very particular about it. . . . Large feasts or banquets where hundreds of thousands of animals were killed, he prohibited. He directed his officers to go on tours every five years for the inculcation of Dharma or righteousness and

for other matters. He had Mahamatras or Governors of Provinces before, but in the fifth rock edict he speaks of his having created the office of Dharma Mahamatras or Overseers of Righteousness in the fourteenth year after his coronation and sent them to different countries—those under his immediate sway and those which were semi-independent. They were to work amongst old and young, rich and poor, householders and recluses, and amongst the followers of different sects, and their business was to look to the good of all, to establish and promote righteousness, and to protect all from oppression. They were also to work amongst those who were near to him in his family and amongst his relations. In the fourth rock edict he tells us that by his efforts the destruction of animals, which was enormous before, has almost ceased by his religious orders or instructions, and a regard for one's relations, for Brahmans and Sramans or holy recluses, obedience to father and mother and to the old, and general righteousness have increased and will increase, and he hopes that his sons, grandsons and great grandsons, etc., up to the end of the Kalpa will go on promoting it; and being righteous themselves will instruct their subjects in righteousness. For "this," he says, "is the highest duty one can perform that of preaching righteousness." In the seventh rock edict he allows the followers of all sects to live wherever they like, because what they all aim at is self-restraint and purity; and in the twelfth he says that he shows his regard for the members of all sects, for the recluses and householders, by gifts and various other ways; but the highest and best way of showing regard is to seek to increase the importance of all sects. This

importance is increased by ceasing to extol one's own sect or revile that of another. Asoka also speaks of his having planted trees and medicinal herbs, dug wells, and opened establishments for the distribution of water, for the good of man and animals in different places even in the countries of his foreign neighbours."*

Asoka's missionaries went to all parts of India and Ceylon, and to Bactria, Greece and the Malay Peninsula.

In the beginning of the fifth century after Christ, Fahian, a Chinese pilgrim, travelled in India and found the Buddhist religion flourishing everywhere. There were many hundreds of Sangharamas, and many thousands of monks in them living and propagating the law of the Buddha. About Mathura, he said, "The people are well off, without poll tax or official restrictions. . . . The kings govern without corporal punishment; criminals are fined according to circumstances, lightly or heavily. . . . Throughout the country people kill no living thing, nor drink wine. . . they have no shambles or wine shops in their market places. . . . Down from the time of Buddha's Nirvana, the kings of these countries, the chief men and householders have raised Viharas and provided for their support by bestowing on them fields, houses, and gardens, with men and oxen. . . . All the resident priests having chambers, have their beds, mats, food, drink, and clothes provided without stint; in all places this is the case."†

In Pataliputra, the capital of Asoka, Fahian found the ruins of the wonderful palace of that

*Page 16-18, R. G. Bhandarkar's "Peep into the Early History of India."
†Page 142, Civilisation of the Buddhist Age, R. C. Dutt.

Emperor, and their workmanship was so grand that he thought no human hands could have accomplished the work. "In the city is the royal palace, the different parts of which Asoka commissioned the genii to construct by piling up the stones. The walls, doorways and the sculptured designs are no human work. The ruins still exist."

"The nobles and householders of this country have founded hospitals within the city to which the poor of all countries, the destitute, cripple, and the diseased may repair. They receive every kind of requisite help gratuitously. Physicians inspect their diseases, and according to their cases, order them food and drink, medicine or decoctions, everything in fact that may contribute to their ease. When cured, they depart at their convenience."*

In the capital city of Ceylon, the traveller saw a Sangharama containing 5,000 monks. Everywhere the pilgrim was received with lavish hospitality, and he took ship back to his native country from Ceylon. This glorious picture of the country is marred only by one incident which shows in its naked horror the superstition of Brahmanism. On the sea, a great tempest arose and the superstitious Brahmans in the vessel said to one another: "It is because we have got this Sraman (Fahian) on board we have no luck, and have incurred this great mischief. Come, let us land this Bhikku on any island we may meet, and let us not all perish for the sake of one man."† Fortunately Fahian had his patrons and was thus narrowly saved from a miserable death.

The high level of industrial knowledge and skill

*P. 144-146, Civilisation of the Buddhist Age, R. C. Dutt.
†*Vide* above, R. C. Dutt.

attained during Asoka's time is testified to by an iron pillar in Delhi, 22 feet high above ground, 20 inches under ground, with a diameter of 16 inches at the base and 12 inches at the top. About this pillar with inscriptions, Dr. Fergusson states, "It opens our eyes to an unsuspected state of affairs to find the Hindus at that age forging a bar of iron larger than any that have been forged even in Europe to a very late date, and not frequently even now. . . . It is almost equally startling to find that after an exposure to wind and rain for fourteen centuries, it is unrusted, and the capital and inscription are as clear and as sharp now as when put up fourteen centuries ago."

Speaking about Magadha, Mr. J. N. Samaddar says, "It was here that the skill of the stone-cutter attained perfection and he produced models which, as is admitted by the learned author of the Early History of India, would be found beyond the craftsmanship of the twentieth century. The engineers and architects of the royal house of Magadha could design and construct spacious and lofty edifices, throw massive embankments, equipped with convenient sluices, and other appliances of extraordinary engineering skill, handle enormous monoliths and polish them in a way which is still unsurpassed, execute commodious chambers with burnished interiors which even to-day would dazzle the eyes of all, and build palaces which led people to believe that those must have been built only by superhuman beings and could not have been upreared by human hands."*

When another Chinese pilgrim came in the seventh century, though Buddhism was declining, he

*Page 5, Glories of Magadha, by J. N. Samaddar.

found numerous monasteries with thousands of monks existing side by side with Hindu temples. There was no rivalry between the followers of the two religions. The Buddhist universities were attended by Brahmans and other Hindu students. Buddhists often learned philosophy from Brahman teachers. Kings showed no partiality in their gifts. They helped both religions lavishly. Even in the same family, both of the kings and of the people, sometimes the father and son followed different religions. The cities and palaces welcomed learned men of both faiths and patronised them without quarrelling.

Harsha Vardhana was the emperor at that time and he was a devout follower of the Buddha. Every five years he used to celebrate a great festival at Prayag lasting for 75 days, when he gave away all the accumulated wealth of the empire and even his personal possessions, the crown, the robe, and the valuable ornaments as gifts to the learned and the poor, to the recluses and the householders, in the name of the Buddha, the Sun and Siva. On the first three days the gifts were made in the name of these three deities. On the fourth day 10,000 Buddhist monks each received 100 gold coins, a pearl and a cotton garment. Then for twenty days gifts were bestowed on Brahmans, on the following ten days on heretics, and in the last thirty days the poor, orphans and disabled of all denominations were given presents of clothes, money and food. Everything was given until the emperor became a penniless monk and had to get a cloth from his sister to wear before he departed from the festival. Rich men and subordinate kings used to

purchase back the royal robes and jewels and present them to the king. Harsha had celebrated this festival seven times in 35 years. Such was the way in which devout kings cherished the teachings of the Buddha and set the example of renunciation and love for all mankind.

When Hiuen Tsang was in India, Harsha called a large assembly of learned men and kings to hear the professor discourse on Buddhism. The assembly was attended by Harsha and eighteen tributary kings, by 4,000 monks of both schools of Buddhism, and 2,000 Brahmans and Jain Pundits. The Nalanda University alone had sent 1,000 monks well versed in every branch of learning. The assembly lasted for eighteen days. The king was never tired of spending his wealth for the comfort and recreation and enlightenment of his guests. It was at the close of this grand function that the pavilion of the assembly was set on fire and an attempt was made to assassinate the king by some fanatical Brahmans; and 500 Brahmans had to be expelled from Harsha's dominions.

The high eminence India had attained in all spheres of civilisation was nowhere more amply embodied than in the world famous Buddhist University of Nalanda, established about 400 A.D., and the oldest and largest residential University of the world. Successive generations of kings and rich men delighted to spend their wealth for the development of this educational institution. They built monasteries, halls, libraries, temples, tanks and gardens which were models of architectural skill and beauty, and made huge endowments of land and other forms of wealth for the maintenance of the

University which at one time owned 200 villages. In the time of Hiuen Tsang there were 10,000 students from all parts of India and even outside, many hundreds of teachers whose fame had spread far and attracted students to the University, and discourses used to be given from about a hundred platforms. There were eight halls and 300 appartments. The University had a large library which occupied three buildings, one of which was nine storied. Thousands of scholars flocked from distant places to hold discussions and the day was not sufficient to put and answer questions. A very high standard of learning was maintained and admissions were made only after a severe test of competency; tutorial instruction was provided; the subjects taught included the sacred books of Buddhism and Hinduism and Hethuvidya, Sabdavidya, Chikitsavidya (medicine), Tantra (magic and goddess worship), and the Sankhya. Missionaries went out from here to spread knowledge, to establish schools and hospitals, to propagate Buddhism and to advise foreign countries which invited them. Such was the reputation of this University that students who claimed to have studied there were respected wherever they went. It was indeed a "School of Universal Learning," with one of its mottos running thus: "Conquer anger by forgiveness, conquer a wicked man by virtuous deeds, conquer a miser by liberality and conquer a liar by truth."

The first great historical empire of India was founded by Chandragupta Maurya, and his grandson Asoka united practically the whole of India and made her the "greatest nation of the world," supreme in her internal prosperity as well as

international reputation. India established her right to be called the Spiritual Mother of humanity by propagating her national religion, Buddhism, in all parts of the civilised world—Greece, China, Japan, Tibet, Burma, Ceylon, etc.,—by her famous seats of learning like the University of Nalanda whence streams of spiritual and temporal wisdom flowed in all directions, and by proclaiming and practising the largest religious toleration and human brotherhood ever attempted by mankind.

Chapter X

HOW BRAHMANISM KILLED BUDDHISM

Though Buddhism was, in its teachings, opposed to the old Brahmanical creed, neither the Buddha nor any of the later leaders of that religion showed any hostility to the Brahmans. On the other hand, they continued to treat them with evident partiality. This could not have been entirely out of respect for their learning, but was partially also out of fear of the terrible influence the Brahmans wielded in society. Though gifts to Brahmans continued to be given, Brahmanism as a creed was being steadily undermined by the progress of the Buddha's religion. Animal sacrifices came to be neglected, which meant that Brahmans lost their vocation and source of income as well as of influence.

Similarly the caste system was being ignored. The Buddha did not directly prohibit the observance of caste, nor did any of the kings penalise it. What the Buddha did was to persuade his followers to

believe in human brotherhood, to convince them that deeds, not birth made men good or bad, high or low; and within his monastic order he recognised no differences. In fact, there was no necessity to impose any prohibition regarding the practice of caste distinctions, because none but the Brahmans ever really wanted them; and however studiously the Brahmans propagated their fictitious theories, Smrithis and Sastras, caste rules could be of no use unless the kings recognised them. It was therefore quite sufficient if the kings failed to respect them, and Buddhist kings certainly must have refused to enforce them. Other kings also could not have been enthusiastic about the Brahmanical doctrines which were an insult to the rulers themselves. Buddhism and the national awakening which followed it did therefore, undoubtedly make the caste system practically inoperative, except when some selfish kings enforced them to gain the favour of the Brahmans. The Brahman was a Brahman because of his caste; and if caste was destroyed he lost all that he lived for. In this way also, Buddhism was a great blow to the Brahmans. Then there was the neglect of Sanskrit, the distinctive language of Brahmanism, and its sacred literature, side by side with the active revival of Pali, the language of the people. In all these ways, Brahmans and Brahmanism were bound to disappear and be absorbed in the national life if the new movement was not opposed.

The Brahmans cared not only for honour and the gifts, which were not withheld, but wanted to be the highest power in the land, above the people and the king, to be the law-givers, the king-makers and the king-killers, as they had been accustomed to be.

They were, in spite of Buddhism, still holding tremendous worldly powers, they were a wealthy community, and could carry out their imperialistic designs in numerous ways. In the Mahabharata, Bhishma says to Yudhishtra, "the highest duty of a crowned king is to worship learned Brahmans; they should be protected as one protects oneself or one's children, and be respected, bowed to and revered as if they were one's parents. If Brahmans are contented the whole country prospers; if they are discontented and angry, everything goes to destruction. They can make a god, not a god, and a not-god a god. One whom they praise, prospers and one whom they reproach becomes miserable."*

This audacious claim which the Brahman writers of the Mahabharata so boldly made could not have been a meaningless or baseless self-adulation only. It contained a good deal of truth. The Brahmans were a terrible power for good and evil, for evil more often than good, like the feudal Baron robbers of Europe. The murder of King Vena for the violation of Brahmanical laws was not a solitary instance of the tyrannical power of the Brahmans. Their right to kill troublesome or disobedient kings came to be boldly asserted and exercised through the council of ministers in which Brahmans generally held the highest position of authority. The domestic revolutions, "throttling in bed," usurpations, and other inexplicable calamities, which are a feature of the period of national kings may be, in most cases, traced to the working of the invisible hand of the Brahmans operating through the Brahman-dominated councils. Thus the power of the priestly class

* Pages 64-65, Peep into Early History of India, by R. G. Bhandarkar.

over the kings was almost unlimited and could be used unscrupulously, though often it must have also served to keep the kings within legitimate limits.

The authority of the Brahmans over the people was no less effectual. In the administration of the big cities as well as of the small villages throughout the country Brahmanical influence was supreme. "It was the practice of the king in early times to establish in every city, with gifts of free quarters and rent free lands, a body of learned Brahmans with a prescribed course of duties mainly religious. The Brahman assembly thus constituted had primarily to attend to the moral and spiritual welfare of the people." * These assemblies exercised lay powers also, such as protection of grazing grounds, water-courses, looking after temples and places of public worship and the like. In the villages the Brahman Sabhas were the supreme governing body. "The Sabha was the assembly of the Brahmans in which other castes had no place. . . . As has been abundantly demonstrated by the evidence adduced, the Sabha was the supreme governing body of the village, but the village was not of course, inhabited by the Brahmans alone but by people of other castes as well."† From the royal court down to the small village, the Brahmanical power was a thing to be dreaded. It went still further and whenever they got an opportunity they began to set up Brahman kings, and we find that such rulers were placed on the throne in Kashmir, Magadha, Assam and other places.

The north-western region of India was the

*Page 162, Local Government in Ancient India, by Radhakumud Mukerji.
†Page 309, Local Government in Ancient India, by Radhakumud Mukerji.

gateway of all invaders and here it was that the Brahmans had one of their most important strongholds for many centuries, holding constant communication with foreigners such as the Greeks, the Turks, the Scythians, the Chinese and the Huns. Whenever the Brahmans wanted the help of foreigners to bring about the downfall of a king or a dynasty which they disliked, their position of vantage in north-western India afforded facilities as well as a strong temptation to invite or encourage the invasion of foreigners, and as we shall see hereafter, they must have freely utilised this favourable situation to enforce their supremacy in the country. These temporal advantages, in addition to the unique position they occupied as the exclusive custodians of religious lore and experts in many branches of learning, enabled them to control the leading strings in every sphere of life of a community, the vast majority of whom had been denied all learning and freedom for many centuries. In these and other ways the Brahman's grip on the destinies of the country was indeed greater than we can fancy from this distance of time. Even the Buddha and Asoka must have been very careful not to come into open conflict with such a powerful aristocracy whose antecedents were sufficiently frightful, as may be seen in the fate of Rama and Sita, and in the destruction of the race of Kshatriya kings, besides numerous other events.

With all the above advantages and sanctions in their hands, it was not to be expected that the Brahmans would remain quiet when their status in society was being undermined by the spread of Buddhism. It was Buddhism which gave the nation life, and so long as that most democratic of religions

continued to influence the policy of kings and regulate the beliefs of the people, there was no likelihood of the Brahmans being able to preserve their virtual dictatorship of the country. Though, outwardly for a long time there was perfect toleration and even hearty co-operation between Buddhism and Brahmanism, the Brahman priests as a community clung to their caste exclusiveness and privileges and lost no opportunities that came in their way to overthrow the Buddhist influence. From the nature of the circumstances, they could have done hardly anything else. The only other course open to them was to abdicate their dictatorial and almost superhuman position in society, identify their interests with those of the nation in general and merge themselves in the brotherhood of the people of India, which the Buddha so successfully inaugurated and which his royal disciples would have realised but for the eternal opposition of the Brahmans,—an opposition which even at the present day is the rock on which all democratic movements in India are being wrecked. So much for the awful power of the Brahmans ; we shall now see how they reacted to the Buddhist revival.

Brahmans had begun to join the Order of Monks from the earliest days of the Buddha. When monasteries were built by devout people all over the country and endowed richly for the comfortable maintenance of monks, the Brahmans who had been losing their sacrificial income, joined the Order in large numbers and with their learning and influence helped to strengthen it and became its leaders. "Already in Asoka's time the Brahmans had probably captured the whole machinery of the Sangha as effectually as

in modern times they have controlled the inner working of British departmental machinery."*

Though they became Buddhist monks, their hereditary caste mentality did not leave them and they continued to be Brahmans as well as Sramans and often observed their caste isolation. Fahian, the Chinese traveller, mentions an instance: "In Pataliputra there once lived a wise Brahman of profound learning who did much to extend the influence of the law of the Buddha. He belonged to the Mahayana School . . . . When the king went to visit him, he did not presume to sit down in his presence, and if he should from a feeling of affection grasp his Guru's hand, the latter would immediately wash himself from head to foot."† The Brahman had developed untouchability even in those days, and though he became a Buddhist he considered the touch of the king as causing pollution. The incident throws much light on the unbounded tolerance of the Buddhist order and the ingrained incapacity of the Brahman to divest himself of the imperialistic attitude. If in the matter of caste which was diametrically opposed to the essential spirit of the Buddha's teachings, the Brahmans could preserve their orthodoxy, they must have encountered little difficulty in gradually introducing their priestly practices into the Sangha system, and in fact that was what actually happened. The Sanghas degenerated like the priestly class who had joined it in large numbers and controlled its working. "Buddhist monks formed a vast and unmanageable body of idle priesthood owning vast acres of land attached to

*Page 148, E. B. Havell's Aryan Rule in India.
†Page 167, *vide* E. B. Havell.

each monastery and feeding on the resources of the people; and Buddhist ceremonials and forms bordered more and more on Buddha worship and idolatry."*

Just as in the capacity of sacrificial priests the Brahmans had cultivated the worship of numerous gods and made pious gifts a necessary accompaniment of all ceremonies, so as monks they were responsible for the introduction into the Buddhist system of a large number of Bodhisattvas, archangels or saints, and for the encouragement of rich gifts to monks, and for the gradual growth of worship of images which provided scope for ritualism and priestcraft. But so long as the leadership of Buddhism remained in the hands of the Indian kings of Pataliputra, Brahmans were not very successful in subverting the original principles of the order and it was only when foreigners came to India, became Buddhists and began to sway the destinies of the Sangha, that priestcraft succeeded in establishing itself as a characteristic of the Sangha system of worship.

"So long as Pataliputra retained its political supremacy the organisation of the Sangha was strong enough to resist the heterodox Brahmanical theories. But the rise of Hellenistic influence and the transfer of Buddhist political power in the north from Pataliputra to Takshasila combined to relax the discipline of the Sangha, so that about the beginning of the Christian era, when the Tartar or Kushan dynasty had carved out a powerful kingdom in the north-western provinces of Asoka's empire, a great schism appeared in the Buddhist Sangha. The popular party headed apparently by Brahman members of

*Page 24, Ancient Hindu Civilisation, Vol. I, R. C. Dutt.

the Sangha detached itself from the primitive doctrine of the faith, and under the name of the Mahayana or Great Vehicle compiled a revised version of the Dharma in which the divinity of the Buddha was accepted, as an orthodox belief, and Patanjali's teaching of Yoga became incorporated in the Buddhist canons."*

Before long the priest developed unedifying mystic rites known as Tantrikism which became an integral part of the Mahayana School. "Even from the seventh century itself, the development of the infatuating Tantrikism which reached its climax in the eleventh century and which practically verged on sorcery claiming a religious bias, attracted the notice of the Mahayana School and ere long the idolatrous cult of female energies was found grafted upon Mahayana and the pantheistic mysticism of Yoga. . . . It went even farther. A mysterious union was established between the goddess Kali and the Buddha."† Brahman Nagarjuna was one of the most famous leaders of the Mahayana philosophy and he became the Head Priest of Nalanda University, probably the highest position a monk could aspire to in those days. He was a distinguished authority on Tantrikism and from his presidential chair in the University he advocated that Brahma, Vishnu, Siva and Tara possessed the attributes which Brahmans had assigned to them and were worthy of worship.

The Sangha irretrievably lost its pristine purity and ideals in the hands of the Brahmans and their foreign patrons, and the consequent schism into the

*Page 137-38, History of Aryan Rule in India E. B. Havell.
†Page 167, The Glories of Magadha, J. N. Samaddar.

Hinayana and the Mahayana paved the way for the ultimate downfall of Buddhism in India. It should not be supposed that all this happened as a result of a deliberate plan on the part of the Brahmans to wreck Buddhism. As a learned community, the Brahmans naturally rose to be leaders of the new religion. Because Buddhism did not actively prohibit the observance of caste from the very beginning, the caste and priestly mentality followed the Brahmans into their new sphere and there produced exactly those results which they had produced in the Vedic religion. It was the priestly class which became the Brahman caste ; the distinctive profession and unique qualification of the Brahman was that he was a priest by very birth. In its origin, its growth and its functioning through the ages, Brahmanism has always meant first and foremost priestcraft. So when the Sangha tolerated the "Brahman," that is failed to convert him into a real Buddhist, it inevitably opened the door to priestcraft and its own downfall.

But there was deliberate Brahman opposition outside the Sangha. When the whole country was basking in the sunshine of great ideals of brotherhood and a virtuous and beneficent life, when the king and the commoner were co-operating in building up a great Indian nation, when the sacred feelings of religious devotion and patriotic benevolence roused by Buddhism were producing glorious blossoms in the fields of science, literature, arts and architecture, when the people of India liberated from their bondage were carrying the joyful tidings of emancipation into distant lands and filling the world with the fragrance of the Buddha's

teachings, alas! in the land of that Buddha, the Brahman priests were studiously engaged in polishing the chains of imperialism and replenishing the armoury of aggression and exploitation with Manu Sastras, Sukra Nitis, Puranas, idolatrous temples, Kali worship and other literature and institutions of wily priestcraft. The Manu Sastra gave the finishing touches to the caste system and made it a masterpiece of imperial spoliation for the use of all foreign exploiters, who became masters of the country ere long.

Buddhism was a religion for all, for the poor and the lowly as affectively as for the prince, and that was the chief source of its popularity. In the success of the new religion, the Brahmans saw the weakness of their own creed which derived its strength, not from its ability to satisfy or ennoble the people's life but from their enforced weakness and ignorance. They therefore began to reshape the Brahmanical religion with a view to gaining popular support for it. Even then they did not think of extending the true benefits of that religion which they enjoyed to the other people as well. Instead, they built up a separate branch of Brahmanism, a branch of fictions, legends, rank idolatry, superstitious beliefs and gruesome ceremonies, and worship of the Brahmans in addition to that of the numerous gods and goddesses. "They set themselves to gradually construct a synthetic religion out of the Aryan and the non-Aryan cults which would afford spiritual enlightenment and consolation to the general public. This is the vast system of idolatry dealt with in the Puranas."*

*Page 170, Epochs of Civilisation, by Pramanath Bose.

"The Puranas constitute the special literature of the Sudras, whose rites and ceremonies they exclusively regulate. The Shruties and the Smritis are claimed as the exclusive law books of the Brahmans only."*

Both the Ramayana and the Mahabharata were finally recast at this period with many new stories and legends added, so as to fascinate the ignorant masses. That their authors had a motive to discredit Buddhism is seen from a passage in the Ramayana. "In Ramayana, Rama is made to say that Buddha is a thief, the Tathagata is a Nastik or Atheist. A wise man who can help it should therefore not be inclined towards Nastika."†

"It is also probable that in opposition to the Buddhists who used the common language to teach their religion, the Mahabharata, which as we have shown was given a religious form by Sauti (about 300 A. D.), mainly to counteract the influence of Buddhism was entirely written in Sanskrit, the language of the orthodox religious books of the Aryans of India."‡

"The Brahmanical Puranas originated in the stories partly to be traced to the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and partly such as were narrated in every house from generation to generation and constituted the folklore of Buddhistic-India."§

It was very often as we shall see hereafter, with the help of foreigners that the Brahmans propagated the new religion. These foreign people, such as the Sakas, the Yu-chis, the Arabs and Turks and Rajputs

*Page 473, Vicissitudes of Aryan Civilisation in India, by M. M. Kunte.
†Page 377, Epic India, by C. V. Vydia.
‡Pages 332-333, Epic India, by C. V. Vydia.
§Page 472, Vicissitudes of Aryan Civilisation in India, by M. M. Kunte.

had come to India from countries where idolatry and secret rituals were the prevailing religion of the people. They could not easily divest themselves of their superstitions and belief in black magic. Their presence tended to degenerate the Sanghas, but at the same time they proved to be valuable helpmates to the Brahmans in their efforts to popularise the religion of the Puranas. "The Puranas began to be recast when the worship of Hindu deities rose in popular estimation about the time of Wema-Kadphises (a foreign king and champion of Hinduism) circa 250 A. D. and the process continued through the Gupta period to a much later date and new Puranas appeared from time to time ; and it has hardly ceased even to this day, since we find Mahatmyams springing up now and then though not Puranas in a complete shape."*

Buddhism had given rise to numerous great monasteries, stupas and halls of worship all over the country which by their magnificence as well as the appeal of their teachings attracted huge congregations and inspired them to give lavishly of their wealth for their construction and maintenance. It was too clear a lesson for the Brahman priests to lose sight of, and they set about rivalling the Buddhist institutions by the construction of temples which by their external grandeur and by the awful mystery of their dark interior held popular imagination in superstitious reverence. "But because the Buddhist edifices attracted the populace and made an impression upon it, the Brahmans made efforts to build large temples where the heroes of the Ramayana

*Page 6, Peep into History of Ancient India, by R. G. Bhandarkar.

and the Mahabharata were adored."*

The Vedic sacrifices were the centre and source of the priests' power. They had gone out of fashion with the advent of Buddhism. In their place the priests now sought to bring into popular favour the temples of gods and goddesses to cater to the vulgar taste of the ignorant and to serve as the citadels of their own domination and exploitation, the strongholds of caste and the dark dungeons of idolatrous priestcraft. Siva worship was already in vogue in South India and some of the foreign people, such as the Scythians, were followers of that cult. Rama and Krishna were the most popular national heroes, around whom songs and folklore had grown up throughout the country. The people wanted grand buildings and images of their heroes, not necessarily for worship, but to give free play to the instinctive desire for artistic creation, for Buddhist nationalism had brought out the competitive and constructive instincts of the craftsmen and they delighted to embody their exuberant spirit in buildings and sculpture and statues. The Brahmans had only to divert these tendencies and use them for their own advantage. Buddhism did not give sufficient scope for the shaping arts, as Buddha was the only legitimate object of reverence, and even in Buddhist monuments the craftsmen pressed into service their native gods and goddesses and heroes to furnish models for their work. The intelligent Brahmans could easily detect this tendency and in their temples they were able to satisfy in a larger measure than in Buddhistic buildings the artistic vanity and fantasticism of the people as also their love of pomp and

*Page 460, Vicissitudes of Aryan Civilisation in India, by M. M. Kunte.

show and mystery. Buildings and images were rising in popular esteem, and to these the Brahmans had only to add their priestcraft in order to make the ideal temple. They succeeded beyond their expectations; the temples proved to be their salvation; they are even to-day the desperate strongholds of priestly fanaticism scattered throughout the length and breadth of the country right across all currents of reform and democratic revivals.

"The Saiva propagandists of the South were the Brahman reformers of Hinayana Buddhism, as the Vaishnava propagandists of the North had been in earlier times the Brahman reformers of Mahayana Buddhism. The earliest of these Saiva revivalists was Manikka-Vacagar, a minister of one of the Pandyan kings of Madura about the sixth century A. D. He came to be known as the Hammer of the Buddhists."*

Whatever the Brahmans might do to capture the people's mind, to satisfy the craving of the multitude for awe and grandeur and mystery, Brahmanism as a caste-imperialism was not acceptable to any self-respecting Indian so long as he had the ability to resist it. The temples alone could not therefore serve the cause of Brahman supremacy, unless they were backed by political power, whether Indian or foreign, which would support by force the prerogative of the Brahmans. Therefore, whenever they could bring a king under their control, they tried to persecute Buddhism in the earlier stages by indirect underhand means, and later on by open violent methods. In the first Indian empire of Chandragupta Maurya, a Brahman, Kautilya was the chief

*Page 218, Aryan Rule in India, by E. B. Havell.

minister and directing genius. His famous Artha Sastra contained clever provisions to check the growth of Buddhism :—

"No ascetic other than a Vanaprastha (forest-hermit) no company other than the one of local birth and no guilds of any kind other than local co-operative guilds shall find entrance into the villages of the kingdom."* Thus Buddhist monks and Sanghas could not lawfully exist in the villages. Buddhist chronicles state that when Pushyamitra became emperor by usurpation with the help of Brahmans, he burnt their monasteries and killed many of their monks. As we shall see in the next chapter, many an Indian ruler had to suffer martyrdom at the hands of the Brahmans because of his love of Buddhism. Such black deeds do not generally come out, done as they are in secret, but what information has leaked through leads us to the irresistible conclusion that a king who did not support Brahmanism was hardly ever safe on his throne in those days. When the Huns under Mihiragula invaded the North-Western Province, he won over the Brahmans to his side by "building Saiva temples and endowing Brahman monasteries, which the lowest of the twice-born, as vile as their protector, did not disdain to accept."† The same Mihiragula ordered the wiping out of all Buddhist monasteries and monks in his kingdom.

But so long as India had at least a glimmer of national life and freedom, she made incessant efforts to assert her self-respect and thwart Brahman tyranny and it was only when the country ultimately fell a victim into the hands of foreigners that Buddhism was crushed to death and Brahmanism spread its fangs

*B. 11 Chap I, 48, Arthasastra page 54, Shama Shastry.
†Page 269, History of Aryan Rule in India, by Havell.

over the prostrate people. " For it was in the Dark Age that religious persecution began in India. Monasteries were demolished, monks were banished, and books were burnt; and wherever the Rajputs became rulers, Buddhist edifices went down and Hindu temples arose. By the end of the 10th century, Buddhism was practically stamped out from India, and the work of destruction was completed by the Muslims who succeeded the Rajputs as masters of India."* So complete was the destruction that modern antiquarians and historians who have gathered Buddhist sacred books from all parts of Asia have not succeeded in gleaning any valuable text from India.

Historians are not yet agreed as to the causes which led to the complete disappearance of Buddhism from India. Some have attributed it to the decadence of the true religion of the Buddha. That was certainly what made Buddhism indistinguishable from the popular religion of ancestor-worship and hero-worship. But a degenerate Buddhism could have prevailed in India as it did in other countries, and in fact it remained, and what has disappeared is only the Buddhist organisations and not the religion. Some writers have treated Buddhism as a sect of Hinduism. We do not know of any Hinduism having existed before the Buddha and if Hinduism did not exist, Buddhism could not have been a sect of it. Before the Buddha there was the Brahman religion of sacrifices which was practically confined to the small Aryan community and we know also that the common people must have had their ancient religion of same sort of hero-worship and ancestor-worship and images. But

*Epochs of Indian History, by R. C. Dutt.

just as the old Vedic religion was a religion of the domestic hearth which the Brahmans subsequently developed into the religion of grand public sacrifices, so the primitive religion of the Indian people was a tribal or domestic one and had no public places of worship like the big temples of later days. Buddhism was a revolt against both the prevailing systems. In fact it was the first organised religion in the modern sense of the term "religion". It succeeded in driving out the Brahman religion of sacrifices, but gradually succumbed to the influences of the popular religion. Its final absorption in the primitive religion was due to the fact that the Brahmans favoured the religion of gods and goddesses and rituals, and not the religion of righteousness.

As an intellectual and learned community, the Brahmans became the leaders of Buddhism, and succeeded first in thoroughly disfiguring it with ritualism and images, and last in destroying its separate organisation of monasteries and monks with the help of the foreign masters who came into power. The Buddhism of Harsha and Nagarjuna did not disappear. It formed the nucleus of the later Hinduism. The real conflict was between the Brahman community and the Buddhist order of monks and monasteries. If the latter remained, the Brahmans could not become the sole leaders of the country, which has always been the prime motive of Brahmanism, nor could they enforce their system of castes. The rivalry ended in the complete destruction of the external institutions of Buddhism—the monks and monasteries. Brahmans became the undisputed leaders, and thereafter corrupt Buddhism was easily submerged in the new popular religion,

Hinduism, which grew out of it. Caste is an entirely independent social order which was neither in the ancient Aryan religion nor in the primitive Indian religion nor in Buddhism. It is the unique contribution of the Brahman priests, and none else ever wanted it, until the country lost its national religion and political freedom, and the Brahmans succeeded in imposing the system upon the people almost at the point of the bayonet with the help of alien masters.

The Jews of Palestine gave birth to a Jesus Christ; but they crucified him and rejected his religion; and their country passed into the hands of the Muslims where Britain now holds the balance between the Jews and the Muslims. India produced a Buddha, but when she rejected his religion of righteousness, she passed into the hands of the Muslims and Britain now holds the balance between the Hindus and the Muslims. The Jews became the kingless people of the world and the Hindus the only civilised nation that is not master of its own country. The two great religions, Buddhism and Christianity, rejected in the land of their birth, spread far and wide, and now sustain the religious life of the greatest nations of the East and the West, whereas the Hindus and the Jews rank as the orphans of humanity.

CHAPTER XI

HOW BRAHMANISM CRUSHED NATIONALISM

Whenever an Indian king or dynasty actively patronised Buddhism, there appeared an usurper or invader, the king was somehow despatched and a new dynasty favourable to Brahmanism came into power. Invariably the new rulers also began to appreciate the noble religion of the Buddha more than Brahmanism and wanted to throw off the Brahman yoke which helped them to power. Then another usurper or invader came on the scene and repeated the same process of establishing a new Brahmanical dynasty. It was this unedifying story that was enacted century after century in all the principal kingdoms during this period of national awakening. We have already seen that the Brahmans claimed authority even to kill the king if he happened to go against their laws. In the present chapter we shall see some instances of the exercise of this power.

Brahmans frequently made use of Indian usurpers and even foreign invaders as their instruments for the enforcement of Brahmanism upon the country. These unpatriotic and sometimes treacherous methods also were sought to be justified by the philosophy of the Puranas. It is said in the Mahabharata (Santi Parva 67-68): "if a powerful person willing to conquer a state which has either no king or a weak king approaches, it is wise for the people to welcome him, for nothing is more heinous than the sins of anarchy. A cow that gives milk with

difficulty is tormented more and more but one that is easily milked nobody troubles"* We cannot deny that sometimes these dangerous doctrines did serve to remove a really bad king and to help a useful rival to the throne. But in the hands of an unscrupulous priesthood, who had their own axes to grind in opposition to the interests of the country, occasions of justifiable use were very few, and most often the powers must have been exercised to overcome opposition to the free promulgation of Brahmanism.

Chandragupta Maurya of Magadha was the first historical emperor of India. He was able to come into power with the help of a clever Brahman, Kautilya. From very ancient days, Magadha was a famous centre of Indian power and influence as distinct from the Aryan civilisation of the Vedas. The Brahmans were always inimical to that country. In the Panchavimsa Brahmana we are told that the people of Magadha were distinct in culture from the Aryas. Its association with the Buddha made that country almost the very heart of all India. It was there that the Enlightened received his first royal recognition; and ever afterwards Magadha continued to patronise the Sangha. The progress of Buddhism must have given added importance to that State, and its support of the rising creed must have considerably strengthened the latter. It was quite a natural association of two national forces, the religious and the political, and as history subsequently showed, that association was destined to have profound influence on the evolution of oriental life and civilisation. "But this great land of which we

*Page 195, Epic India, by C. V. Vydia.

are speaking in strains of unbounded enthusiasm and praise was regarded with deadly aversion by the Vedic Aryans." . . . . "Apparently the country was not in good repute with the Vedic people, and a Brahman living then in the Magadha country was called Brahmabandhu – a degraded Brahman." . . . . And you will be surprised to hear that the land of Magadha, even now, is under ban, for the Brahmans of Mithila will avoid bathing on this side of the Ganges on auspicious occasions."* It was this hated kingdom of the non-Aryan, and the non-Aryan religion of the Buddha which were threatening to overthrow Brahman domination in Aryavarta.

In the North West of India, the Punjab was a stronghold of the Brahmans who were watching from there for an opportunity to check the growing importance of Magadha. Chandragupta who was in the service of the king of Magadha was prompted to rebel against the king. The rebellion did not succeed, and Chandragupta took refuge with the Brahmans in the Punjab and from there began to mature further plots with the help of Chanakya. When Alexander invaded India, Chandragupta and his Brahman supporters invited him to attack Magadha, but a mutiny in the ranks of the Greek army averted that calamity and the Greek warrior returned to his country. Afterwards Chandragupta and Chanakya managed to kill the then king of Magadha and establish the Mauryan dynasty. Very soon the small kingdom expanded into an empire and the grandson of Chandragupta, Asoka the Great, became the greatest apostle of Buddhism. We have seen something of the glories of the Empire of

*Pages 6, 7 and 8—Glories of Magadha, by J. N. Samaddar.

Righteousness which Asoka established in India and outside. Brahmans were evidently disappointed in their hope that the Mauryan dynasty which they had set up would give full scope for Brahmanism to prosper. So that famous royal house which made India the greatest nation of the ancient world was soon usurped by one Pushyamitra who treacherously assassinated the last Maurya emperor. Thus Brahmans again asserted their prerogative. Pushyamitra was their man, and he even started to persecute the Buddhists.

"It may have been a Brahmanical faction which put an end to Mauryan supremacy. . . . The celebration of the great national festival (Horse-sacrifice) by Pushyamitra has been taken by Mr. Vincent Smith and other writers to indicate the reaction towards Buddhism and the beginning of the gradual extinction of the Buddhist religion in India."* Brahmans were not satisfied even with this and wanted to enthrone a Brahman king in Magadha. "Devabhumi, the last Sunga king, perished through a plot instigated by the Brahman minister Vasu Deva who became the founder" of the Kanva dynasty of Brahman kings.† A determined effort must have been made to impose Brahman domination and abolish Buddhist influence, for we find that the Manu Samhita was codified at this time and Bhasyas (Commentaries) to some of the Sutras are also believed to have been written then. But these designs were frustrated by the advent of another rising Indian people, the Andhras, who conquered Magadha. They seem to have been patrons of Buddhism.

* Page 121, Aryan Rule in India, E. B. Havell.
† Page 25, Glories of Magadha, by Samaddar.

Though the Brahmans thus failed in Magadha for the time being, they immediately fostered a rival foreign dynasty in the North West under the Kushan kings of Turkish origin who favoured Brahmanism. A new kingdom was carved out of the Mauryan Empire. Wema-Kadphises II of this dynasty adhered to the Brahmanical School of which the worship of Siva was the chief cult. The next king "Kanishka according to Buddhist tradition was also under the influence of orthodox Brahmans before he became an enthusiastic patron of the Sangha."* "Wema-Kadphises, however, seems to have been a more thorough Hindu than any other foreign prince, and in his time the Brahmanical revival may be understood to have truly begun."†

But as invariably happened in such cases, these kings also soon gave up their Brahmanical leanings and took up the cause of Buddhism. King Kanishka of this dynasty became a staunch upholder of the Dharma. He called a large assembly of monks to settle the disputes among the various sects and they reduced the teachings of the Buddha to a definite form. Kanishka too suffered martyrdom for his faith in the religion of the Enlightened. He was "smothered to death in his bed."

Another king of Kashmir Jayapira "trusted his Kayastha ministers and financiers and the Brahman historian narrates that a Brahman's curse killed him;" (Dutt) which means in other words that the Brahmans killed him.

A similar revolt against Magadha was organised in Saurashtra and a foreign dynasty of Shah kings

* Page 142, Havell's Aryan Rule.
† Page 58, Peep into History of Ancient India, by R.G. Bhandarkar.

carved out an independent kingdom there. The first of these kings Nahapana was evidently a great patron of the Brahmans, because "he gave sixteen villages to gods and the Brahmans; fed a hundred thousand Brahmans every year; provided eight wives for Brahmans at Prabhasu, the holy place."* In all these cases, however, the kings refused to become puppets and patronised Buddhism along with Brahmanism.

In the Deccan the Buddhist kings were superseded by a Rajput dynasty, the Chalukyas, who were protagonists of Brahmanism. The fourth king of this line Pulakesin I destroyed the monastery at Amaravati and abolished Buddhism in those parts. He performed Asvamedha Yajna and other sacrifices; grants of lands were made to Brahmans; temples were built; worship of Siva in the terrible form of Kapaleswara was made popular.

When the Magadha Empire under the Andhras was broken up, the Brahmans caught the opportunity to help their patrons to capture the throne once more. Thus commenced the famous Gupta dynasty and a long period of Brahmanical supremacy, huge horse sacrifices and the revival of Sanskrit.

During the period of the Gupta kings, the Brahmans seem to have made a very successful effort to consolidate their influence and make a compromise with the kings and the people in the matter of religious teachings and observances. A new form of Hinduism of temple-worship and the Puranas was brought into favour to satisfy all parties and somehow oust the importance of Buddhism. Kings as well as Brahmans were interested in keeping the

* Page 131, Buddhist Period, by R. C. Dutt.

people weak and submissive for exploitation. The caste system served effectively to divide them into groups and prevent their rising against oppressors. It was the most deadly weapon of imperialistic domination ever invented by the human brain. The temple was another important instrument in the scheme of the priests to exploit the people for their own profit and sometimes also for that of the kings. There was thus a common platform for the two parties to join hands.

It would seem that the Brahmans agreed to give up their Vedic religion of sacrifices which had become discredited in the opinion of most people. They also agreed to adopt the Kshatriya philosophy of the Upanishads, and also the great national heroes, Rama and Krishna, as part of the new religious system. The Epics and the Puranas were adopted as the basis of the new faiths and the acceptance of the Kshatriya philosophy was symbolised by the inclusion of the Bhagavad Gita in the Mahabharata. To propitiate the followers of the Sangha, Lord Buddha was recognised as an Avatar of Vishnu. All parties were thus sought to be pacified. The Kshatriya religion of the Upanishads was accepted; Vedic sacrifices which were the chief bone of contention were given up; the popular religion of temples, popular among the masses and among the foreign rulers, was given a prominent place, and the Buddha was included in the hierarchy of gods. But what did the Brahman priests gain? Brahmanism has never stood for any religious doctrine or faith. Its life and soul, then, as it is now, was the caste system with the Brahman as the highest sacredotal caste, and its vital interest was priestly exploitation. These two objects were

achieved in an abundant measure by the new arrangements—in fact in a greater measure than was ever possible in the past, as we shall see in the next chapter—and Brahmans must have felt exalted by the great victory of their cause.

Though all these things were accomplished in the Gupta period, there was yet no guarantee that Brahman predominance would be upheld by succeeding rulers, and without the king's support it could not be maintained. Repeated experience had shown that though new kings, in order to obtain Brahman co-operation to establish their power, often yielded to the wishes of the latter, no self-respecting ruler would long tolerate the yoke of Brahmanism. Indian kings almost invariably, encouraged Buddhism side by side with Brahmanism, even when they had been raised to power with the help of Brahmans. Brahmanism could therefore be permanently established only with the disappearance of Buddhism and also of all Indian rulers. Its security lay in the revival of a race of Kshatriya princes who would submit to the Brahman as the highest caste and whose primary concern would be exploitation of the country—the common platform on which priestly imperialism could join hands with foreign imperialism. It happened exactly like this. The Brahmans did not rest until they succeeded in handing over the nation to a new race of Kshatriyas, the Rajputs, whom they raised to Kshatriyahood for the purpose and who in a few centuries enslaved the country first to debasing priestcraft, and then to Muhammadan fanaticism.

One of the Gupta emperors, Harsha Vardhana, became a staunch adherent of Buddhism, and when

the Chinese scholar Hiuen Tsang visited India, he held a large assembly lasting for a number of days of many hundreds of Buddhist monks and learned Brahmans. The king's love of Buddhism roused the ire of the Brahmans and the great pavilion of the assembly was set on fire and an attempt made on the life of the emperor, who used to give away all his wealth down to his robes and jewels to Brahmans and monks and the poor every five years. It is said that five hundred Brahmans were banished from the kingdom as a result of this conspiracy. But this small failure did not matter much to Brahmanism. In a few years Harsha's empire was completely broken up.

Harsha sent a complimentary mission headed by a Brahman to the Chinese emperor who sent a return mission to Magadha, but before the Chinese mission had arrived, Harsha died. "It was therefore to be expected that orthodox Brahmanism would seize the opportunity of Harsha's death to re-assert its political supremacy in Aryavarta."* One of the ministers usurped the throne ; the Chinese mission was insulted ; the Chinese leader became indignant and getting help from Tibet overran Magadha. The Brahman king of Assam helped the Chinaman with military equipment and large supplies of cattle. The emperor's army was crushed, and the Chinese leader took full vengeance for the insult offered to him by the massacre of many thousands. Thus came to an inglorious end the last Hindu empire of Hindustan.

The empire having been broken up, the Brahmans took the opportunity to invite foreign adventurers to support their cause. The Rajputs appear

*Page 247, History of Aryan Rule in India, by E. B. Havell.

on the scene as the valiant protectors of Brahmanism. Historians do not know definitely the origin of the Rajputs, but all are agreed in believing that they were the descendants of some of the foreign invaders. That they were raised to power by the Brahmans is admitted in the legend of the Puranas. It says that they were the descendants of four warriors conjured into existence by the sage Vasishta from the sacrificial fire he kindled on Mount Abu. In plain language they were a new people raised to Kshatriyahood by the Brahmans in order that they might re-establish Brahmanism in the land. "Everywhere they favoured Puranic Hinduism, and the Brahmans rewarded them for their toil, and recognised the new race as the Kshatriyas of modern times."* "Whatever the origin of the Rajputs may be, there is no doubt that they were newcomers within the pale of Hindu civilisation and religion. Like all new converts they were fired with an excessive zeal to revive the religion they embraced. Brahmans worked on the zeal of this new race of Kshatriyas and the Chohan and the Rathore vindicated their claims to be regarded as Kshatriyas by establishing the supremacy of the Brahmans."†

With the help of the Rajputs who became powerful in all parts of India, Brahmanism entered on a career of merciless extirpation of Buddhism, and with it of nationalism. The avenues of light and information were all closed. From the 8th to the 10th century an impenetrable darkness enveloped Northern India. History refuses to disclose the nature of the happenings of that terrible darkness

*Page 38, Later Hindu Civilisation, by R. C. Dutt.
†Page 40, Later Hindu Civilisation, by R. C. Dutt.

As in the Dark Age which followed the Mahabharata War, so under the cover of this frightful oblivion, Brahmanism did its work thoroughly: monasteries were demolished, monks were banished or killed, books were burnt, Buddhism was stamped out; nationalism was crushed. The country fell into the hands of Rajput barons, soon to be followed by the Muhammadan invaders who completed the work of annihilation. Rajputana became a congeries of rival states, each with its own chief, war-loving and constantly quarrelling with each other. "As the robber barons fought in Europe, after the break up of the Constantine Empire, so the clans and their chiefs fought in India. . . . Rajput chiefs, both in Rajputana and the Punjab, battled unceasingly against each other; and, alas, with Muslims against Rajputs, with varied fortunes."*

There could be hardly any doubt that Rajput rule was an undiluted military imperialism, a coalition of Kshatriya exploiters and insatiable Brahman priests, in which the people were fleeced to amass wealth for palaces and temples. In an incredibly short time huge temples requiring the labour of many thousands of workmen, generally slaves or prisoners, and involving fabulous expenditure, were built all over the country; the secret cells of temples were filled with gold and silver and other treasures beyond description; hundreds of dancing girls with all the temptations of music and decoration served in the temples to complete the vices of priestcraft. The kings surrounded themselves with all imaginable pomp, luxury and vice. Nobody cared for the people; we hear nothing of the people

*Page 20, India—A Nation, by Annie Besant.

when the Muhammadan invaders made their incursions into the big cities and temples for plunder of the accumulated treasures. The princes kept quarrelling among themselves for wealth and women. The Brahmans were sunk deep in the temptations of the temple. We see Muhammadans marching through the country hundreds of miles without anybody opposing them, appearing before the gates of cities and temples, before the authorities got any information, and loaded with rich booty returning unmolested over vast tracts of inhabited area. There seemed to be no government in the land.

The despotic nature of the regime could be noticed also in the employment by Rajput rulers of large bodies of Muhammadan mercenaries. It was so in Vijayanagar too, another Brahman dominated empire. Both in North India and in Vijayanagar, the presence of Muhammadan troops in the heart of the Hindu kingdoms, in the employ and confidence of their rulers, facilitated the final success of the Muhammadans. What was worse, the soldiers of Islam were invited to invade India, and there were Rajput princes to help them in their conquest of the country. The four chief royal houses of North India were Delhi, Chittor, Kanouj and Gujrat. The last two kings sided with the Muhammadans until they became undisputed masters of the situation. Raja Jaichand of Kanouj is said to have invited Shahabuddin to attack Prithvi Raj of Delhi.* India fell betrayed by her own princes and priests who were no more interested in the unity, strength and prosperity of the Indian masses than the Muhammadan or the Europeon conquerors.

*Page 25 Decline and Fall of Hindu Empire, by Lala Sunder Das.

THE MENACE OF
HINDU IMPERIALISM

[UNDER MUSLIM RULE]

800—1200 A. D.

Chapter XII

BRAHMAN IMPERIALISM TRIUMPHANT IS HINDUISM

The fate of a country usually hangs on the character of its aristocracy. Even in democratic countries, it is not the unwieldy majority that controls real power but an influential minority who, by their wealth or education or status or other qualifications, are in the ordinary course of things, recognised as the leaders of the people. The rise and fall, the progress and decadence of the nation will depend to a great extent on the ideals which animate the policy and conduct of that minority. From days immemorial, the Brahmans have been the undoubted aristocrats of India, the leaders of the people, the custodians of religious and secular learning, unrivalled politicians and administrators, and owners of wealth and power, besides being the trustees of the peoples' conscience as priests. Probably no other class of persons in any society ever combined in themselves all these advantages so exclusively as the Brahmans. It is equally doubtful if any other aristocratic class has ever exercised their

privileges to the detriment of the common people so unscrupulously and for so long a period as these Hindu priests. For an understanding of the causes which have brought India to her present condition no study is more important than that of the policy and doctrines of the Brahmans.

The disappearance of Buddhism and the passing of political power into the hands of the Muhammadans, though they meant the extermination of national life, was a triumph for Brahmanism. As in the centuries after the break up of the Indo-Aryan kingdoms of the Gangetic Valley, the Brahmans showed extraordinary activity in the preparation of Sutras and their promulgation in different parts of the country, so in the period of national prostration and political chaos roughly from the eighth to the twelfth century after Christ, there is a phenomenal revival, expansion and consolidation of the theocratic domination of the Brahmans. One prominent result of the invasion of India by the Muhammadans was that, so far as Hindu society was concerned, Brahmans became its undisputed leaders and law-givers. "After the overthrow of the Hindu princes by the Muhammadans, the Hindu princes and chiefs lost a good deal of their prestige, but the leadership of the Hindus instead of passing into the new political authority, namely Muhammadan rulers, passed almost entirely to the Brahmans."* There were no powerful Indian rulers to question their right to decide what should be or should not be the religion of the people, and by what principles their social life should be governed. When the Muhammadans had overcome all opposition and settled down as rulers, unless some

*Page 149, An Essay on Hinduism, by S. V. Kelkar.

of them were fanatically inclined to make forcible conversions, they left the Hindus in the hands of their religious leaders and whenever they wanted to pacify them by quiet methods, they made use of the Brahmans as their accredited representatives.

Another great advantage was that, for the first time in history, all the peoples of India, of all sects and denominations, were brought under the supremacy of the Brahmans. Till then they had claimed to be priests of the three higher castes only and did not presume to speak for the Sudras and other Indian peoples except to keep them at a safe distance. The Muhammadans called all the non-Muslim inhabitants, without any discrimination, by the common name "Hindu," which practically meant non-Muslims and nothing more. This simple fact contributed to the unification of India more than any other single event, but also, at the same time, condemned the dumb millions of the country to perpetual subjection to their priestly exploiters. Indians became "Hindus," their religion became Hinduism and Brahmans their masters. "The word Hindu itself is a foreign one. The Hindus never used it in any Sanskrit writing, that is those which were written before the Muhammadan invasion"* "When the Muhammadans came they called all people who were in India, but who did not belong to Muhammadan religion, Hindus. . . . All castes and creeds which did not acknowledge Muhammadan religion were Hindus."† Thus was the Indian people, by an innocent accident of history, permanently subjected to a disastrous social and religious

*Page 22, An Essay on Hinduism, by Kelkar.
†Page 29, An Essay on Hinduism, by Kelkar.

system in the shaping of which they had no hand and could thereafter obtain no voice, but were entirely at the mercy of the Brahmans. Brahmanism became Hinduism, that is the religion of all who were not followers of the Prophet of Mecca. Fortified thus in an unassailable position of sole religious authority, Brahmans commenced to establish their theocratic overlordship of all India.

One of the first signs of Brahmanical revival, as in the past, was the promulgation of new Shastras, Puranas and other religious literature alleged to be the works of ancient sages. The priests must have been conscious of the untenability of their doctrines and their own unworthiness to lay down rules for the good of society, for they wrote new works in the name of ancient authors and altered ancient works to suit their present contentions. There is hardly any Sanskrit composition which has not been tampered with, altered or added to by them. There is no famous Rishi or teacher in whose name they have not concocted scriptures. There is no sacred book into which fiction and legend and imaginary history have not been interpolated. The most ancient of scriptures, the Rig-Veda, has not escaped the profane hand of interpolators and its tenth book is wholly ascribed to gods as if to conceal their true origin and later authorship. Veracity as to facts was never a feature of Brahman authors, so much so that historical unreliability has become a universal literary characteristic of the Sanskrit language. The best critic would be unable to separate the grain from the chaff, to say where facts end and fiction begins. This is even more the case in regard to the so-called sacred literature. The period of Brahmanical revival

naturally abounds in such fraudulent Shastras and Puranas.

Brahmans emigrated in large numbers from the North to the Southern kingdoms which had not been conquered by the Muhammadans and whose rulers knew very little about the ancients and their Sanskrit classics. Any false Shastra could therefore be easily palmed off as a genuine old work. The Puranas and Dharma Shastras of this age are standing monuments of the degrading depths to which a scheming priesthood could sink in their infatuation for worldly domination. "The Puranas which are still extant were composed in the age of Vikramaditya and Siladitya, but have been considerably altered and largely added to in succeeding centuries even after the conquest of India by the Muhammadans. . . . We accordingly find the Puranas filled with sectarian disputes, each sect upholding the supremacy of its own special deity chosen from the copious storehouse of the modern Hindu pantheon. . . . Later Hindu writers wrote under the disguise of ancient names to give their modern works an appearance of antiquity and authority. Thus all the eighteen modern Puranas profess to be the works of Vyasa, the compiler of the Vedas."*

No less than sixteen writers have composed Dharma Shastras. These are (1) Atri, (2) Vishnu, (3) Harita, (4) Yajnyavalkya, (5) Usanas, (6) Angiras, (7) Yama, (8) Samvarta, (9) Katyayana, (10) Brihaspati, (11) Parasara, (12) Vyasa, (13) Samkya, (14) Likhita, (15) Daksha and (16) Satapata. Some of them belong to the early centuries of the Christian era and the rest

*Pages 155-157, Epochs of Indian History (Ancient), R. C. Dutt.

came into existence after the Muhammadan conquest, but even the earlier ones have been mutilated and altered. "Some of them undoubtedly belong to the Puranic times or even earlier, but chapters have been interpolated in these works in recent times after the Muhammadan conquest."* The Dharma Shastras of Yajnyavalkya, Vyasa and Parasara were undoubtedly produced or recast after the Muhammadans became masters, and the authors assumed the names of the famous Rishis of ancient days to give their works an appearance of antiquity. The Tantras represented the latest development of priestcraft of the most degrading and revolting type, and contained dark, cruel, obscene practices for acquiring superhuman powers. "To the historian the Tantra literature represents, not a special phase of Hindu thought, but a diseased form of the human mind, which is possible only when the national life has departed, when all political consciousness has vanished, and the lamp of knowledge is extinct."†

In the Dark Age between the eighth and the tenth centuries after Christ, when the Rajputs and the Brahmans were engaged in North India in stamping out Buddhism, by destroying all that was Buddhistic—buildings, books and even monks—the famous Brahman teacher Kumarila Bhatta was carrying on his campaign in favour of the Vedas and their sacrifices, and in condemnation of Buddhism. He was followed in later centuries by many famous writers such as Padmagupta, Bhatta Narayana, Jayadeva, Madhava, Purnaprajnya of the Kanarese country, Sayanacharya of Vijyanagar and others.

*Page 72, Later Hindu Civilisation, R. C. Dutt.
†Page 88, Later Hindu Civilisation, R. C. Dutt.

Under the rule of the Sultans and the Mughals when the only refuge of the Hindu masses was their gods and goddesses, Brahmanism found it easy to impose itself on the credulous and fear-stricken population. "It is indeed a remarkable fact, that under the adverse political conditions of the rule of the Sultans, Hindu society evolved new means of self-protection against alien influence by means of rigorous domestic legislation as embodied in some of the most important Smriti compilations which were all produced during this period. Thus Madhavacharya, Visveswara Bhatta, Candeswara, Vacaspathi Misra, Prataparudra, Raghunandana and Kamalakara, all flourished during this period and fixed Hindu social and domestic manners and customs in different parts of the country by their writing." . . . . Under the Mughal monarchy, as a literary historian of India so aptly remarks, "Brahmanism remained with its undying vitality of intellectual life to continue its own course unmoved."*

The unfortunate truth, however, is that what was self-protection, nay self-glorification for Brahmans was damnation for the rest of the Hindus. Priestly monopoly in all its heartlessness, and the unhealthiest restrictions and worst superstitions of Brahmanism started from the time of the Rajputs and were legitimatised and perpetuated during several centuries of national lifelessness under alien subjection. This will become clear by an enumeration of some of the typical recommendations and commandments of the Shastras of this period :—(1) They insist on the observance of caste distinctions which are made more rigorous and oppressive than before.

*Pages 15-16, Local Government in Ancient India, Radhakumud Mukerji.

(2) They prohibit inter-marriages, inter-dining and other kinds of social intercourse among the castes. (3) They condemn as degraded caste persons those who follow numerous useful arts and crafts, such as goldsmiths, blacksmiths, washermen, weavers, carpenters, traders in various articles of daily need and so forth. (4) They enforce the observance of various degrees of pollution and untouchability among the castes. (5) Some communities are branded as impure and therefore to be shunned, as Mlechchas and Chandalas. (6) Muhammadans, Christians, the Chinese and the Japanese, and other civilised peoples are treated insultingly as impure communities whose contact will cause pollution. (7) Not only punishments for offences, but also the reward of labour are to be regulated according to caste distinctions. " The wealth that is stolen by the Brahman tends to well being in the next life ; the wealth that is given to the Sudra tends to Hell."* (8) They prohibit sea-voyages which are to be punished with expulsion from caste or degrading penances. (9) They encourage idolatry in all its debasing forms. (10) Temples and their premises are glorified as spots of divine manifestation and visits to them are treated as a sure way to God's grace. (11) Gods and goddesses are described in numerous fantastic forms with many heads and hands, in the shape of animals and semi-human beings, sleeping on snakes and riding on rats, possessing wives and children, some of whom sit on the heads of their lord, and doing things which decent men should shun—pictures which now furnish models for advertisements of beer and cigarettes and stories which disfigure the nation's life. (12) They

*Sukraniti ii, 811-812.

recommend self-immolation in fire or water for sinners. They sing false praises of Brahmans, of their sacred origin, of their exalted nature, of their extraordinary powers to bless and to curse, of the terrible effects of their wrath, of the great merit of making valuable gifts to them and of the necessity for all other men to do reverence and be submissive to them. There is no good result that cannot be achieved by making golden images of Ganesa, Vishnu, Asvins, Kubera, Indra, etc., and after worship, presenting them to Brahmans. "There is no sin, no incurable disease, no domestic calamity and no loss or injury to property which cannot be washed away by such gifts."* (14) They recommend self-immolation of widows on the funeral pyre of their dead husbands, enforce child-marriage and prohibit re-marriage of widows.

We shall quote a few instances to serve as samples of the rules and beliefs promulgated by the Shastras and which prevailed during the time of Akbar. (*a*) "A cough is a punishment for killing a Brahman. Cure: Making a lotus of four tolahs of gold, and after repeating certain incantations performing with it the ceremony of Howm, and giving it to a righteous Brahman."

(*b*) "A fever is a punishment for killing an innocent Kshatriya. Cure: Repeating one hundred times the incantation of Mahadeo, feeding thirteen Brahmans; and sprinkling with water the image of Mahadeo one hundred times."

(*c*) "A woman whose husband dies before her, in her former state was of a great family, which she left to live with a stranger and when he died, burnt

*Page 78, Early Hindu Civilisation, R. C. Dutt.

herself with him. Cure: She must pass all her life in austerities or put an end to her existence by burying herself in snow."

(*d*) "A woman who does not menstruate is punished for the following action: Once in a former state when she had her customs, some neighbouring children came into her house to play, but she was angry and drove them away. Let her fill an earthen vessel with water from one hundred wells, throw into it a betel-nut, a masha of gold, and perform Howm; and then give it to a Brahman. She must also give five or seven or nine or eleven kinds of fruits to children to eat."

"A woman who has only one daughter is punished for having possessed a great deal of pride in her former existence, and not showing proper respect to her husband. Cure: Let her plate the horns of a white ox with four tolahs of gold and the hoofs with four tolahs of silver, and cover the hump with one and a half tolah of copper; which she must bestow in charity with a vessel made of two and half seers of brass, besides satisfying with food one hundred Brahmans. Or she must make ten mashas of gold into the form of the deity, and after performing certain incantations, give it in charity and feed fifty Brahmans."*

Ordeals for deciding cases were prescribed according to caste. For Brahmans: "They weigh the person in a pair of scales; then they perform certain religious ceremonies and weigh him again, when if he is found to be lighter than he was the first time, his claim is admitted; but if his scale preponderates, or the balance stands even he is declared

*Pages 717-18, Ayin Akbari, Francis Gladwin.

a liar. Some books admit of a trifling difference. This kind of ordeal is peculiar to Brahmans."

For Vaishyas: "The person stands up to the navel in water with his face towards the east. He next dives under the water, when one of the bystanders shoots from a bow, measuring 106 fingers' breadth, an arrow made of reed, without any iron spike, and another person runs and fetches it back. If the appellant keeps all this while under water, his cause is declared just. This ordeal is peculiar to the Byess."

For Sudras: "Deadly poison is administered thus: . . . This is to be mixed up with thirty times the quantity of ghee, and after repeating certain incantations administered to the person who is to be tried. He must turn his face to the south and the person who administers it must look towards the east or the north. If it has not any effect during the time that the spectators can clap their hands five hundred times, his cause is pronounced just, and antidotes are given to him. This ordeal is peculiar to the Sooder caste."*

To support and exemplify these and similar injunctions and superstitions were written the fanciful Puranas—indeed they are still being concocted as occasions arise to praise the sanctity of a temple or the sacredness of a bath or a place of pilgrimage. No story was considered too false, too obscene or too cruel to be propagated as a Purana or Mahatmya. In the words of a distinguished historian of the 20th century such indeed were "the peculiar institutions which she (India) evolved and which enabled her to combat successfully the

*Pages 740 and 741, *vide* Ayin Akbari.

otherwise irresistible influences of the state or political sovereignity, irrespective of the nationality and personnel of such sovereignity for the time being." No doubt they have been supremely successful in preventing the state, whether under the Muhammadans or the British, from emancipating the people from their serfdom to priestcraft, gross superstitions and ruinous exploitation. They have served by their standing insult to humanity to make the Hindus despised by the self-respecting nations of the world.

In accordance with the new ordinances of the saints, Brahmans in many places openly asserted their right to be treated as Bhudevas (earthly gods) and Bhupatis (lords of the earth) demanding worship from all, rulers and the ruled, and claiming a divine right to the ownership of all land. In Malabar it became a widely recognised rule that land could be owned by the Brahmans only and other people should hold tenures under the Brahmans. Shivaji surrendered his entire kingdom to his Brahman Guru and the character of his administration showed that he recognised the Brahmans as the chief beneficiaries of his state. During the regime of a Brahman minister, the Maharaja of Travancore dedicated his kingdom to the deity of the chief temple and began to rule as the Dasa or agent of the deity, and the state was permanently saddled with an obligation to celebrate every six years a festival for Brahmans costing many lakhs of rupees. "There is scarcely a state in Rajputana in which one-fifth of the soil is not assigned for the support of the temples, their ministers, the secular Brahmans, bards and genealogists."* We

*Todd's Annals of Mewar.

saw from the very beginning that it was the Kshatriyas who manfully opposed the Brahmanical pretensions. The priests now started the theory that the race of Kshatriyas had become extinct and there really existed only Brahmans and Sudras, even the Vaishyas having lost their distinctive status. Under this pretext arose the practice of raising Indian rulers to Kshatriyahood after performing expensive ceremonies which served to fill the pockets of the priests and also to proclaim openly the abject submission of the ruler to the Brahmans. In some cases, the Hindu Raja had to go to the extent of becoming the ceremonial bearer of the hereditary Brahman Guru's Vahan (palanquin) whenever the latter visited his state. The southern rulers of the Muhammadan period fell easy victims to these tactics and became willing tools for the enforcement of the caste law upon themselves and their subjects.

The Vaishyas too were deprived of their right to religious sacraments which they had enjoyed from most ancient days Alberuni describes the Hindus of the early eleventh century as living in isolation without any knowledge of other peoples or countries and treating all outsiders as impure castes. He says: "Vaishyas and Sudras are not allowed to hear it (the Veda) much less to pronounce or recite it . . . every action which is considered a privilege of the Brahmans, such as saying prayers, the recitation of the Vedas and offering sacrifices to the fire is forbidden to him to such a degree that when, for example, a Sudra or Vaishya is proved to have recited the Vedas— he is accused by the Brahmans before the ruler and the latter will order his tongue to be cut off."*

*Page 195, Later Hindu Civilisation, by R. C. Dutt.

Wherever Brahmanism penetrated, there the people were compelled to submit to insulting classifications assigning to them, graded positions in society and curtailing their liberties of social intercourse. Brahmanism was no less fanatical in its aims and brutal in its methods than the bigots of Islam who soon succeeded them.

In the caste-scheme, the temple occupies the position of the highest tribunal of the Brahman. It was not purely a religious institution, a place of worship. It served many more purposes The village temple was generally the centre of the village administration and the high court of caste law. Caste distinctions and their gradations were decided on the basis of the rights enjoyed in the temple by the parties. (1) The Brahmans alone had access to the Holy of holies and could perform pooja (offering) to the idol. (2) The next in rank could stand in front of this innermost shrine but not go in. (3) Those of the third grade were allowed inside the compound wall but were not permitted to enter the main building of the temple. (4) Others lower still had to stand outside the outer wall. (5) Then there were the untouchables who had to wait at varying distances from the temple, some not being free to enter even the temple street.

Caste disputes were heard and decided in the temple premises in accordance with the law as expounded by the priest. Elections to the village assemblies were held there; there were held the meetings of the assembly; ordeals were administered in front of the deity; fines imposed often went into the temple coffers. The temple-priest had an effective voice in all these functions. The village school

was conducted in the temple by the priest or his dependants and the venom of caste-spirit was injected into the blood of the children to make them proof against all notions of self-respect. The larger temples of the towns and cities were sometimes used as the treasury of the ruler. Unexpended gold, jewels and money were preserved in underground cells and secret chambers of the temple so that the temple priest practically became the controller of the finances, which office he used to fill even in the days of Magasthenes. For the Brahmans, the temple offices offered the most lucrative profession they had ever since the days of the horse-sacrifices and supplied all their cravings—food, wealth and women. Feasting, dancing, music and other indulgences of the ancient Yajna were brought back and popularised through the temples. Their very plan and construction were symbolical of the sacrificial ground. The old Mantras and Tantras continued to be used, and the new deity Kali satisfied the craving for bloody sacrifices.

The temple movement was actively supported by the Rajahs for quite another reason also. The temples were a source of considerable revenue to the state and they were used to collect money from the credulous people by all sorts of deceptions and tricks. Kautliya, the Brahman minister of Chandragupta, describes in his Arthasastra the methods to be employed for making the people part with their hard-earned wealth. "The superintendent of religious institutions may collect in one place the various kinds of property of the gods of the fortified cities and country parts and carry away the property to the king's treasury."

"Or having on some night set up a God or an altar or having opened a sacred place of ascetics, or having pointed out an evil omen, the king may collect subsistence under the pretence of holding processions and congregations (to avert calamities)."

"Or else he shall proclaim the arrival of gods by pointing out to the people any of the sacred trees in the king's garden, which has produced untimely flowers and fruits."

"Or by causing a false panic owing to the arrival of an evil spirit on a tree in the city wherein a man is hidden making all sorts of devilish noises, the king's spies under the guise of ascetics, may collect money (with a view to propitiating the evil spirit and sending it back)".

"Or spies may call upon spectators to see a serpent with numberless heads in a well connected with a subterranean passage and collect fees from them for the sight, or they may place in a borehole made in the body of an image of a serpent or in a hole in the corner of a temple or in the hollow of an ant-hill, a cobra, which is, by diet, rendered unconscious, and call upon credulous spectators to see it (on payment of a certain fee). As to persons who are not by nature credulous, spies may sprinkle over or give drink of such sacred water as is mixed with anæsthetic ingredients and attribute their insensibility to the curse of gods. Or by causing an outcaste person to be bitten by a cobra, spies may collect revenue under the pretext of undertaking remedial measures aginst ominous phenomena."* As the Frenchman Abbe Dubois wrote more than a century ago, "There is no trick which the

*Page 304, Arthasastra, Shamasastry.

Brahmans will not employ in order to excite the fervour of the worshippers and thus to enrich themselves by their congregations to avert calamities."

"The worship of images has never an ennobling influence on a people's mind, but in India the practice was accompanied by other evils. Down to the time of Manu, the Vaishyas and the mass of the people could worship their gods in their own way, and could offer libations at their domestic hearth. When however the worship was transferred from the fire-side to the temple, priests as custodians of such temples had an additional influence on the popular mind, and forged an additional chain round the necks of the people. Pompous celebrations and gorgeous decorations arrested the imagination and fostered the superstition of the populace; poetry, arts, architecture, sculpture, and music lent their aid; and within a few centuries the nation's wealth was lavished on these gorgeous edifices and ceremonials which were the outward manifestations of the peoples' unlimited devotion and faith. Pilgrimages which were rare or unknown were organised on a stupendous scale; gifts in lands and money poured in for the support of the temples; and religion itself gradually transformed itself into a blind veneration of images and their custodians. The great towns of India were crowded with temples; and new gods and new images found sanctuaries in stone-edifices, and in the hearts of the ignorant worshippers."*

Rajas and rich men were induced by all sorts of cunning and deception to build costly temples. There is a typical story about the founding of the famous temple of Jagannath. Raja Inderdumman

*Page 70, Later Hindu Civilisation, by R. C. Dutt.

sent a learned Brahman to pitch upon a site for the founding of a city. When he came to the seashore he saw a crow dip itself in the water three times and worship the sea. He was surprised and asked the crow the reason for its strange conduct. It replied that it was once a Deva (god) and became a crow by the curse of a sage. That spot was frequented by gods, and the crow which was about to attain liberation from the curse was worshipping the gods. The Brahman then saw by his spiritual vision the wonderful events that took place there and reported the matter to the Raja who built a large temple on the spot where the crow bathed. Such were the silly fables told and deceptions practised by priests, and almost every one of the many thousands of temples in India, big and small, derives its origin from similar or worse fabrications. The purposes for which temples were actually built may be detected in the nature of their daily rituals and the wealth and feastings associated with them. It is said about Jagannath: "The Brahmans wash the image of Jagannath six times every day, and dress it every time with fresh clothes; as soon as it is dressed fifty-six Brahmans attend them and present them with various kinds of food. The quantity of victuals offered to these idols is so very great as to feed twenty-thousand persons."*

In 1020 Mahmud Ghazni plundered the temple of Somnath in Gujrat. "The princes of Hindustan had endowed it with about ten thousand villages. A thousand Brahmans worshipped the idol continuously . . . a chain of gold weighing two hundred maunds, with bells fastened to it, was hung

*Page 308, *vide* Ayin Akbari.

in a corner of the temple. . . . Five hundred singing and dancing girls and two hundred musicians were in the service of the temple, and all their requisites were provided out of the endowments and offerings . . . . . Many Rajas of Hindustan had dedicated their daughters to Somnath and sent them there . . . . Not a hundredth part of the gold and precious stones he obtained from Somnath were to be found in the treasury of any king of Hindustan."* When he invaded the temple of Nagarkot, the Brahmans paid him a fine of 700,000 gold dinars, 700 maunds of gold and silver vessels, 200 maunds of pure gold, 2,000 maunds of unpurified silver and 20 maunds of various jewels. From the temple of Mathura he took away 98,300 misqals of gold out of the idols alone, 200 silver idols so heavy that they could not be weighed without breaking them up. "When Malik Kafur, in the year 1310 during the reign of Ala-ud-Din Khilji of Delhi, carried out his successful raids into the Deccan and to the Malabar coast sacking all Hindu temples, ravaging the territory of Mysore, and despoiling the country, he is said to have returned to Delhi with an amount of treasure that seems almost fabulous. . . . Colonel Dow, in his translation of the works of Firishta computes the value of gold carried off by Malik Kafur at a hundred million sterling in our money. . . . The country had always been subject to Hindu kings and treasures had year by year accumulated. The Brahmans exacted gifts and payments from the people on all occasions."† The sinful methods employed to attract people to the temples and

*Pages 49, 50 and 53, Mahmud of Ghazni, by Mohammad Habib.
†Pages 402-403, A Forgotten Empire, by Sewell.

extort money from them were nowhere so revolting as in the institution of dancing girls. Writing in 1914 about South Indian temples an author says thus: "The Hindu honours the temple girl as a daughter of the deity; so great an honour is it regarded that the goldsmiths and weavers of Trichinopoly devote the eldest daughter of the family to the temple service of Srirangam. The girls are handed over young and are taught in the temple to read and write, sing and dance and dress themselves daintily, to adorn their hair with flowers and wear their jewels with dignity. When they reach the age of thirteen they go through the ceremony of marriage with the god Subramania who is represented by stone or image or by a figure. After the ceremony they are ready to ply their trade (prostitution !) with the devout worshippers who attend the temple. Their earnings go to swell the temple revenue."

Mr. J. C. Ghosh, the Tagore Law Lecturer, says: "With the establishment of images and temples, dedications of land for their maintenance became necessary. Not only were lands dedicated but slave women were also attached to many ancient temples showing the spirit which led to image worship in India.". . .

"We should know that dedication for the gods meant dedication for the maintenance of the worshipping Brahmans who, because they so worshipped, were called "devalas" and were all but outcastes among Brahmans; a fact showing the not very reputable origin and character of such worship and worshippers, the maintenance of servants, female slaves, dancing girls and musicians and providing for the articles of worship."

Another powerful weapon in the armoury of the priests was philosophy. Before temples came into vogue, Brahmanism was opposed to the liberal teachings of the philosophers represented by the Upanishads and the Sankhya system. With the rise of the new Hinduism, philosophy became a very convenient and extremely useful refuge of the priestly class. Philosophising was developed as a fine art of dissimulation and the ancient sages were quoted to justify practices and rituals which were diametrically opposed to their doctrines. Idolatry was good because God was everywhere and could be worshipped in a stone image as well as anywhere else. Caste distinctions were explained as a divine law which no human being could alter. Every unmeaning ceremony was supported by some metaphysical theory. Animal sacrifices, drunken hysterics, and obscene festivities all had their place in spiritual culture because God could be approached in any way, according to the faith of the worshipper. There is no vile practice, no injustice, no superstition, no cruelty, no immorality which could not be and has not been justified and advocated on philosophical grounds.

" The priests of a religion who advise, encourage and permit crimes to be committed which they could prevent, take upon themselves the whole responsibility for the evil, and in this the modern Brahmans are so much the more to blame because they have done their best to distort and render unrecognisable the primitive religion of which they constituted themselves, the guardians and which however imperfect it may have been, was far from possessing the monstrous character which it acquired

later in the hands of its avaricious and hypocritical interpreters. The Hindu system of religion is nothing more than a lever of which the Brahmans make use habitually for influencing the passions of a credulous people and turning them to their own advantage."*

The caste, the temple and philosophy are the pillars which support the huge system of Brahman imperialism called Hinduism. Caste is the common law which defines the status, rights and responsibilities of the rulers and the ruled, the masters and the slaves, corresponding to, but much more deadly than the enactments of European imperialists concerning their subject nations.

The temple stands for the system of exploitation, which they call capitalism, in modern language. Capitalism, however, is economic only, whereas temple-craft is an intellectual, moral and economic spoliation of the subject people.

Just as the ultimate sanction of European imperialism is scientific militarism, so was philosophic militarism the final authority of Brahman imperialism. Science is now being used for the destruction of man and civilisation in the West; so is philosophy being used for the perpetuation of untruths, oppressions and vices among the Hindus.

We saw the dark cloud of priestly supremacy ominously shaping itself during the age of the Vedas and gradually rising into prominence, increasing in strength and volume, until the brilliant kingdoms of the Gangetic Valley were caught in a treacherous whirlwind and swept away to their mysterious doom. Arrested for a long time in its forward move by the

*Page 613, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, by Abbe Dubois.

righteous might of Lord Buddha, it kept on threateningly behind the brightness of the national rejoicings of free India for over a thousand years. In those years, when the people had their great heroes and also the youthful enthusiasm for such things as exalteth a nation, they made many a successful attempt to save themselves from the storm. So long as there was one strong and self-respecting Indian monarch in the country, the people fought for their free-born rights and to resist the aggressions of the priesthood. The Kshatriya kings stood firm. The Indian emperors held up the flag of Buddhism and kept Brahmanism at bay. When the light of Buddhism became extinct, when the energies of the nation were cramped, when its moral courage, intellectual freedom and physical stamina were subdued by superstitious beliefs, and the feeling of unity and solidarity were crushed under the unbearable weight of foreign subjection intensified by caste degradation,—then it was that the lowering clouds spread over the whole firmament and enveloped the country in an impenetrable gloom. An ancient and gifted people who resisted the march of Alexander, produced a Buddha and made India the greatest nation of the ancient world, yielded their necks to the yoke of Brahmanism.

At least two Brahmanical empires attempted to attain ascendancy over all India—those of Vijayanagar and of the Marathas. The empire of Vijayanagar flourished between 1336 and 1565 and represented the grandest achievement of Brahmanism. The great Madhavacharya was probably its founder, his uterine brother Sayanacharya was its greatest minister. Vijayanagar had its days of

barbaric splendour, wealth and luxury reminding us of the declining glory of Rome, when Rajas and nobles kept many hundreds of women in their harems and many more to attend on them, when palaces were literally paved with gold and jewels, when temples and their priests revelled in the immensity of their ill-gotten wealth, in the dazzling magnificence of their festivals and the fleeting charms of dancing girls, and gorgeous monuments of architecture rose out of the sweat of slaves and prisoners of war. Otherwise, the history of the 250 years of the ascendancy of Vijayanagar is a history of bloody wars without a moment of peace and security, of plots and counter-plots, of indulgence in wine and women, of Sati, slavery and forced labour, of 400 and 500 women being burnt along with the dead king, of women being buried alive along with their husbands, of human sacrifices, such as that of sixty human victims offered to ensure the security of a dam near Hospet, of huge slaughter of animals for religious functions and other frightful excesses of priestcraft. During a nine days' religious celebration the king accompanied by his Brahmans went where the idols were and everyday watched the slaughter of animals. "Then he witnesses the slaughter of twenty-four buffaloes and a hundred and fifty sheep with which a sacrifice is made to the idol."* The frequent wars and the distribution of booty among the Brahmans and temples remind us of those days of Asvamedha (horse-sacrifice) when the duty of the Kshatriya was to fight and amass wealth and share it with sacrificial priests. In the revived Hinduism, we find all the unhealthy features

*Page 266, A Forgotten Empire, by Sewell.

of the religion of horse-sacrifices, with many more barbarous and debasing institutions which deserved but one fate—merciless extirpation. Such brutalities could be excused among the Muhammadan or the Portuguese bigots of those days. But in a land where the Buddha had preached and Asoka had ruled, there was no excuse for the enlightened and sacredotal priestly class when they reared so monstrous a system of sin and exploitation.

Punishment came in a terrible form and with lightning speed. Wherever Hinduism raised its head there the no less cruel hand of the Muhammadans inflicted condign punishment for its sins. First it occurred in the North, then in the middle and later on right down to the southernmost part of India, from one end of the country to the other, the avenging arm of Nemesis followed in the trail of Hindu revival, and except for short periods of interruption under the Mughals, India knew no security nor peace for many a long century. It was one protracted reign of terror and bloodshed. Idols were smashed to pieces, magnificent temples were desecrated or destroyed, the finest monuments of art and architecture, palaces and towers, rich cities and flourishing universities were obliterated from the face of the earth and their enormous wealth of gold and silver and jewels was dragged out from their secret cells and carried to distant lands. Many thousands of men and women and children, Brahmans and Mlechchas were enslaved and sold in foreign markets like sardines. Thousands of women from palaces and peasant homes, from temples and Brahman families, were made to enjoy the common sisterhood of the harems of Sultans and emperors.

Many millions of Hindus were slaughtered, and many more forced to embrace Islam. Scenes of savage massacres, wholesale destruction and blood-curling cruelties beggaring all description took place from end to end of the country.

The unrelenting hand of Karma levied from the superstitious Hindus the toll of gold for gold, slave for slave, women for women, persecution for persecution, blood for blood, slaughter for slaughter, until Britain forced the Hindu and the Muslim to surrender their blood-stained swords and live in peace. Seeing how even after nearly two centuries of British rule, the Hindu still takes pride in treating his brother Hindu as a despicable "untouchable," in fighting to preserve the abominable distinctions of caste, in clinging passionately to dark idolatry, and other iniquities and superstitions, who can say that the punishment was unmerited or too severe ?

CHAPTER XIII

SHIVAJI'S EMPIRE WRECKED BY BRAHMANISM, 1600—1800 A. D.

The rise of the Marathas has been often described as a national awakening in which all classes participated, and which was preceded by and broad-based on a religious and literary renaissance giving a new outlook and impetus to popular aspirations. So far as the circumstances which made a Maratha kingdom possible are concerned, the above estimate may be accepted as true. There is no doubt that a new spirit had taken possession of the

common people and was irresistibly surging forward to find suitable expression in patriotic activity. The rising generation of young men and women had imbibed the ideas of teachers and saints who preached a revolt against the growing superstitions and injustices of the social and religious life, and the times were to a large extent ripe for the advent of a leader to focus the popular feelings and direct them to their successful fulfilment. It may also be conceded that in Shivaji the people believed that they had a worthy leader, and Shivaji himself was probably conscious of a mission, a great cause to live and die for.

But the Maratha kingdom which evolved out of a long struggle and the willing sacrifices of the whole population, cannot be said to have been national in its character, aims or functioning. On the other hand, that state represented in their unhealthiest form the same anti-national forces that had caused the downfall of the ancient Hindu empires, and was by its own intrinsic unworthiness bound to be short-lived. In short, we have in Maharashtra a repetition of the recurring phenomena of Indian history, of a popular, almost national movement falling into the hands of Brahman imperialists, being subverted and exploited by them for their political domination and inevitably ending in quick disruption, sweeping away in its precipitous fall all traces of the ideals which gave it life and strength, and leaving behind nothing but additional fetters of inferiority and superstition. It is this contrast between the original aspirations of the people on the one hand and the character of the Brahmanical state which arose out of them on the

other hand, which forms the most pathetic, and to us of the present day, the most significant feature of Maratha history.

The Muhammadan conquest of North India had brought the Hindus into contact with religious and social forces which were diametrically opposed to their own suicidal castes and rank idolatry. The shock of the inhuman cruelties which marked the steps of the early invaders paralysed indigenous life for a time. But when the terrible dream of massacre and plunder had passed away and the people got accustomed to the darkness of subjection to the alien rulers, their eyes began to see new rays of hope and their minds contemplated new pictures of consolation. Behind the brutal hand of the military adventurers, pious thinkers seemed to see a moral justification for the success of violence and the defeat of the Hindu cause. The Vaishnavite leaders and reformers of North India were all greatly influenced by the universal brotherhood of Islam which welcomed all humanity into its fold and enabled Hindu women, and even slaves, to become the proud queens of Mughal emperors and the mothers of future rulers, whereas Hinduism was a barred prison-cell preventing outsiders from going in and the inmates from moving about. The pure monotheism of Islam, devoid of rituals and priests, but fiery in its devotional appeal and powerful in its unifying grip touched the hearts of the spiritually minded, and they yearned to unite their own countrymen under a similar faith and worship of the One Supreme Being, the God of all humanity. Thus there arose in North India teachers like Chaitanya, Kabir, Nanak, Ramanand, Tulsidas, Jayadev and

others who kindled a fresh and purer religious fervour among the dying Hindu people and saved them from the slough of moral and spiritual despondency into which they had fallen.

A similar phenomenon was witnessed later on in Maharashtra. Here the association of the Hindus and the Muhammadans was even more intimate than in the North and had the further advantage that it was rooted in a spirit of political equality as two strong and independent ruling communities of the country. By inter-marriages, conversions forcible and voluntary, mutual obligations in war and peace, and co-operation in daily administration, in business and also religious and social life, the Hindus and the Muhammadans had learnt to tolerate and respect each other's culture. In the service of the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar and the Muhammadan kingdoms of Bijapur, Ahmednagar, etc. the Marathas had grown in education, wealth and power all over the Deccan. The revenue administration of the Muhammadan states continued to be entirely in Brahman hands. "The nominal Muhammadan rulers of Golconda, Bijapur, Nagar and Bedar were virtually controlled both in the civil and military departments by Maratha statesmen and Maratha warriors, and the hill-forts near the Ghats and the country thereabout were in the hands of Maratha Jagirdars who were only nominally dependent upon these Muhammadan sovereigns."*

A band of inspired saints, teachers and literary men such as Tukaram, Ramdas, Eknath and a host of others flourished in Maharashtra and had prepared the way for a great reformation when Shivaji started

*Page 36, Rise of the Maratha Power, by Ranade.

his career. "The religious revival was not Brahmanical in its orthodoxy ; it was heterodox in its spirit of protest against forms and ceremonies and class distinctions based on birth, and ethical in its preference of a pure heart and of the law of love, to all other acquired merits and works. This religious revival was the work also of the people, of the masses, and not of the classes. At its head were saints and prophets, poets and philosophers, who sprang chiefly from the lower orders of society—tailors, carpenters, potters, gardeners, shop-keepers, barbers, and even Mahars more often than Brahmans." *

A noble effort to bridge the gulf between Hinduism and Islam, to recognise the One God in Rama and Allah, and common human brotherhood in the Hindu and Muslim was another notable sign of the tremendous change that had taken place in the mentality of these earnest souls. "Preachers, both Brahmans and non-Brahmans, were calling on people to identify Ram with Rahim, and ensure their freedom from the bonds of formal ritualism and caste distinctions and unite in common love of man and faith in one God."† No less important a feature and result of the reform movement was the unique revival of the popular language Marathi as a protest against the unreasonable exclusiveness of Sanskrit. Were not exactly these the quite natural yearnings of the national life inaugurated by the Buddha many centuries ago ? The nation has struggled age after age to extricate itself from the deadening clutches of Brahmanism and assert its right to live as a self-respecting people. First, to free herself from the

*Page 10, Rise of Maratha Power, by Ranade.
†Pages 50, 51, Rise of Maratha Power, by Ranade.

degradation of caste distinctions, second, to shake off the servile superstitions of priestcraft in its manifold forms, third, to assert the dignity of the mother-tongue of the common people—these have ever been the rudimentary national aspirations of India until her children lost all feelings of self-respect and their spiritual intuitions by long subjection to alien rule and the daily insult of Brahmanism.

If anything more was required to rouse the patriotic enthusiasm of the Marathas to unite for the protection of their country and religion, that inducement was supplied by the ever present danger of Mughal invasion and the terrors of Aurangzeb's fanaticism. A truly selfless and enlightened leader could have erected a glorious structure of enduring nationality on these foundations ; but alas ! as in the past, nay more, as again and again in succeeding decades, the leadership of this sacred movement fell into the hands of Brahman imperialists. Their ability gave it short-lived shape and strength and success in the beginning, but their selfishness and greed and utter disregard of the nation's welfare foredoomed it to premature extinction.

Shivaji was from his very childhood under the influence of Brahmans. His father had practically deserted him and his guardian was the Brahman manager of his estate. The boy grew up with a strong bias for the orthodox religion of the Puranas and temples. It was given out that Shivaji used to get possessed by the goddess Bhavani and in that state obtain instructions from her, regarding his conduct in difficult situations. This was probably one of the stories promulgated by priests to get Shivaji recognised as an inspired leader. Shivaji was great

in his own way. He had many brilliant qualities of head and heart which eminently fitted him to play the unique role of nation-builder. An intrepid warrior, a resourceful general, a brilliant organiser and administrator, the victor of many a battle and the creater of a kingdom, Shivaji Maharaj was never able to rise above the Brahmanical influence of his childhood and willingly surrendered himself and his kingdom to the yoke of the priests. The dedication or gift of the country to the Brahman or the temple, the acceptance of Kshatriyahood which meant submission to the caste hierarchy, and the recognition of the right of the Brahman to be the Dewans and advisers have been well-known stages of subjection to Brahmanism from the Puranic days of Bali and Vamana down to the recent history of Travancore.

Shivaji's Guru was a Brahman—Ramdas Swami. Shivaji made a gift of his kingdom to his Guru and received it back as a trust to be managed of course for the preservation of Sanatana Dharma. In Travancore the country was dedicated to the temple and the Raja became a Dasa or agent of the deity. By this submission, Shivaji placed himself under a moral obligation to treat the country as Brahmaswam or Brahman-raj.

In his administration, military as well as civil, Brahmans predominated. There was a council of eight ministers immediately under the Raja. The Prime Minister, who held the highest authority both over civil and military administration was the Brahman Peshwa. His office became hereditary and after Shivaji, the Peshwas became the virtual rulers. At the time of Shivaji's coronation all the ministers

except the Commander-in-Chief were Brahmans.

Scattered throughout the western fringe, Shivaji had about 280 forts with villages attached to each. The civil and revenue authority in each fort was in the hands of a Brahman Subedar and the military command in a Maratha Havaldar. A Prabhu was in charge of the stores and repairs. This arrangement was more or less followed in the plains also.

In each unit of the general army under Maratha commanders, there were Brahman and Prabhu colleagues as well as in the forts. Brahmans were also appointed to high command of large armies.

In the Council of Ministers, there was a Brahman Minister of Religion called Panditrao who looked after all religious matters, enforced the rules of caste and custom and the civil and criminal laws, and had control of the royal charities.

All the Brahmans received annual Dakshina or allowances according to their learning and it is said that no Brahman had to go outside the kingdom for a maintenance. The permanent endowments alone made for this purpose yielded an annual income of five lakhs of rupees when the English took possession of the country.

After over thirty years of incessant warfare Shivaji had established an unquestionable right to be considered as an independent sovereign. Such a recognition was also necessary for putting his government on a legal basis. He was anxious to have his coronation celebrated in a fitting manner according to the Hindu Shastras. This was another opportunity for Brahmans to reduce Shivaji to the position of an obedient Kshatriya ruler always respectful to the Brahman. Learned Brahmans were invited

from all parts of the country and 11,000 of them making a total of 50,000 with their wives and children, assembled at the capital, and Shivaji feasted them with sweets for four months besides giving them costly presents of gold and money. The chief priest, Gaga Bhatta, alone is said to have received nearly a lakh of rupees. The whole ceremony involved an expenditure of not less than fifty lakhs of rupees, according to Sir Jadunath Sarkar, while some others put it down at the incredible figure of seven crores. The Brahmans said that coronation according to the Shastras could be performed only of a Kshatriya ruler. A genealogy was therefore invented by the priests and it was made out that Shivaji was a Kshatriya, descended from the Rajput rulers of Udaipur. He was then invested with the sacred thread for which he had to pay large sums to the priests. The latter then demanded another 8,000 rupees for the forgiveness of the slaughter of Brahmans during Shivaji's expeditions. In spite of these lavish gifts, they refused to initiate him into the Vedic Mantra, and continued to speak of him as a Sudra, though he was a noble-born Maratha, and no more or no less. "Shivaji keenly felt his humiliation at the hands of Brahmans to whose defence and prosperity he had devoted his life. Their insistence on treating him as a Sudra drove him into the arms of Balaji Avji, the leader of the Kayasthas."*

The fanaticism of the Brahmans created continuous dissentions in their own community and the different sects kept quarrelling among themselves, each trying to lower the status of the other. "The head of the state, though a Brahman, was despised by

* Page 431, Shivaji and His Times, by Jadunath Sarkar.

his other Brahman servants, because the first Peshwa's great-grand-father's great-grand-father had once been lower in society than the Desh Brahmans' great-grand-fathers' great-grand-fathers. While the Chitpavan Brahmans were waging social war with the Deshastha Brahmans, a bitter jealousy raged between the Brahman ministers and governors and the Kayastha secretaries."*

The Prabhus had rendered yeoman service in all the wars of Shivaji. In spite of the Raja's order not to interfere with the traditional social status of the Prabhus, Brahmans are said to have interpolated new verses into old Puranas to lower the caste prestige of the Prabhus. After the Peshwas began to rule, the Prabhus were practically ignored and hardly any important office was held by them.

The Rajas and the Peshwas exercised legislative, judicial, administrative and executive functions in religious and social matters and brought into force all the sinful provisions of the Shastras. The Peshwa established in Poona a court of religious jurisdiction presided over by Brahmans. "A sort of ecclesiastical court and one for the administration of criminal justice were acknowledged in the city. A learned Shastri assisted by other Shastris supposed to be acquainted with Hindu law was at the head of the first. It took cognisance of all offences against the ordinances of religion and breaches of rules of caste. It was also referred to for judgment in intricate civil and criminal cases, particularly when Brahmans were the parties concerned."†

*Page 430, Shivaji and His Times, Jadunath Sarkar.

†Page 243, A History of the Maratha People, by C. A. Kincaid and D. B. Parasnis, Vol. III.

Muhammadan rulers of Bijapur and other places used to enforce the decisions of Brahman Pandits of Benares. Child marriage and burning of widows were encouraged more than before. Not only the actual widows, but the concubines of the deceased were also induced to immolate themselves on the funeral pyre.

Nor were the saints immune from the persecution of the Brahmans. Ekanath and Tukaram had to endure great troubles because they dared to translate into Marathi the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavad Gita. An outcaste saint, Chokhamela entered in the Pandharpur temple for worship under some inspiration. The Brahmans took the matter to the Mussalman officer who ordered the saint to be punished by being tied to and driven by a team of bullocks and by being tortured to death. He was, however, saved by a miracle.

On the death of Shivaji the Peshwa and his friends wanted to overlook the claims of the eldest son and install the second son as Raja. This brought all the slumbering ill feelings and disruptive forces to the front. The Raja became a puppet of the Peshwas, and a prisoner in his own palace. The Peshwas ruled as hereditary princes. Disgusted with this arrangement the Rajput chiefs became independent in their own districts. The Council of Ministers ceased to function. In order to counteract the influence of the Maratha chiefs of the North, new Brahman commands were created in the South. Within nine years of Shivaji's death his work had been all but destroyed.

No means was considered too wicked for amassing wealth ; wholesale plunder and blackmail were

the usual methods, treacherous murders were common occurrences ; the promises and agreements of ministers and rulers ceased to have any value, as they could be violated without scruples. Even women became notorious for intrigues, murderous plots and military aggression. "They did not realise that without a certain amount of fidelity to promises no society can hold together. Stratagem and falsehood may have been necessary at the birth of their state, but it was continued during the maturity of their power. No one could rely on the promise of a Maratha minister or the assurance of a Maratha general."*

Nothing worth mentioning was done for the prosperity of the subjects ; they had no security from the avarice of their own rulers. Rich men were mercilessly squeezed for money. The last Peshwa had accumulated five crores of rupees at the time of his downfall.

"There was no attempt at well-thought out organised communal improvement, spread of education or unification of the people, either under Shivaji or under the Peshwas."†

The officers were openly corrupt. "Contemporary travellers have noticed how greedy of bribes the Brahman officers of the Maratha state were, even under the great Shivaji."‡ Under the Peshwas the evil assumed frightful dimensions so much so, that it is said of a Brahman superintendent of Poona police, Ghashiram Kotwal, that "once in an independent post he took advantage of it to indulge in a series of abominable crimes. His practice was to seize

*Page 435, Shivaji and His Times, Jadunath Sarkar.
†Page 432, Shivaji and His Times, Jadunath Sarkar.
‡Page 17, Shivaji and His Times, Jadunath Sarkar.

strangers who came to Poona and to rob and murder them."*

Except for the magnetic personality of Shivaji who by his heroic spirit welded together the Marathas into a nation, there is hardly anything in their history of which the nation may be proud. "The period of Maratha ascendancy has not left India richer by a single grand building or beautiful picture or finely written manuscript."† On the contrary, we have a never-to-be-forgotten example of the enormities of Brahman domination.

"The first danger of the new Hindu kingdom established by him in the Deccan lay in the fact that the national glory and prosperity resulting from the victories of Shivaji and Baji Rao I, created a reaction in favour of Hindu orthodoxy; it accentuated caste distinction and ceremonial purity of daily rites which ran counter to the homogeneity and simplicity of the poor, and it politically depressed early Maratha Society."‡

"Caste grows by fission. It is antagonistic to national union. In proportion as Shivaji's ideal of a Hindu Swaraj was based on orthodoxy, it contained within itself the seed of its own death." As Rabindranath Tagore remarks: "'A temporary enthusiasm sweeps over the country and we imagine it has been united; but the rents and holes in our body social do their work secretly; we cannot retain any noble ideal long. Shivaji aimed at preserving the rents; he wished to save from Mughal attack a Hindu society to which ceremonial distinctions and

*Page 175, A History of the Maratha People, Vol. III, Kincaid and Parasnis.

†Page 8, Shivaji and His Times, Jadunath Sarkar.

‡Page 429, Shivaji and His Times, Jadunath Sarkar.

isolation of castes are the very breath of life. He wanted to make his heterogeneous society triumphant all over India. He wove ropes of sand ; he attempted the impossible. It is beyond the power of any man, it is opposed to the divine law of the universe, to establish the Swaraj of such a caste-ridden, isolated, internally-torn sect over a vast continent like India."* It was with these rotten materials that the Poona Brahmans of the 18th century attempted to build a Maratha empire extending over all India. When Nationalists like Mr. Rajwade and Prof. Bijapurkar in the 20th century, delighted to call Shivaji's descendant at Kolhapur a Sudra, who can say that the Congress Nationalists of the present day will not repeat the folly of their hero of Maharashtra?

The people groaned under the iniquities of a priestly domination which crushed all their national aspirations and ideals, forced upon them the indignities of caste servility, impoverished them for the aggrandisement of Peshwas, Brahmans, temples and chieftains, and destroyed the last shreds of security and freedom. They seemed to welcome the British conquerors. "The conquest had been achieved with little difficulty because of the general indifference of the Maratha population."† The disgusting picture of disunion, conspiracy and exploitation was at last removed from sight by the new rulers, and the country was saved for the time from the ravages of Brahmanism. The nation heaved a sigh of relief and passed on to another chapter of its tragic history.

*Pages 430-431, Shivaji and His Times, Jadunath Sarkar.

†Page 233, A History of the Maratha People, Vol. III, Kincaid and Parasnis.

Chapter XIV

SAVED FROM BRAHMANISM—THE SIKHS

When Shivaji was celebrating the establishment of a Hindu sovereignity in Maharashtra with the aid of orthodox Brahman priests from Benares, events of far-reaching importance were taking place in the north-west of India, where a national awakening similar to that of the Deccan was approaching fulfilment in the creation of a nation of patriots, warriors and martyrs out of the humble peasants and rude hill-tribes, who were groaning under the oppression of the Mughal rule and sinking into ignorance and lifelessness under the deadening influences of caste and idolatry. Guru Govind, the tenth from Guru Nanak, became the head of the Sikhs in 1675 and organised his followers not like Shivaji in absolute disregard of the popular aspirations, but for the preservation of those high ideals which have ever been the inspiration of India's national life and the invariable teachings of her prophets and saints.

The beneficial influence that Islam could exert even in those days of plunder and massacre was nowhere so conspicuous as in the lives of the great religious reformers of North India who flourished in the 15th, 16th, and the 17th centuries. There was a gradual and steadily increasing appreciation of the evils of meaningless social distinctions, of the futility of rituals to produce spiritual benefit, and of the evils of worshipping god in numberless forms and names. Ramananda established a new sect with Sree Rama as the supreme object of adoration, preached the equality of man before God, and proclaimed Bhakti or devotion as the best means of

obtaining divine grace and salvation. Goruknath was another teacher of the same period who admitted all castes to his fold. A century later (about 1500 A. D.) Chaitanya roused a new enthusiasm in Bengal by the fervour of his devotion and self-surrender to the god of his heart, Sree Krishna, and he too appealed for the recognition of human brotherhood. But Kabir, more than all others, expressed the spirit of the age by boldly assailing idolatry, denying the divine authority of the Quran and the Hindu Vedas, and protesting against the neglect of the people's language and the exclusive use of Sanskrit.

It was, however, reserved for Guru Nanak to become the founder of a new order of things, a new nation free from many of the foibles and superstitions of the Hindus of those days. He taught that God should be worshipped as the One Supreme Invisible Being and that salvation lay in a life of virtue, purity and good works, and implicit faith in and surrender to God. He denied that it was necessary to give up the ordinary life of the world in order to attain peace here and liberation hereafter, and set the example by resuming the householder's life after many years of renunciation, austerities and wandering which did not lead to any real good. His teachings appealed to Hindus and Muhammadans alike, and both the communities regarded him as an inspired teacher. He was followed by a line of nine other Gurus of whom Guru Govind was the last. He gave the Sikhs a religious, social and political constitution which has served to hold them together as a united community ever since. As in the case of Shivaji, whom the priests succeeded in persuading

that he was a special vehicle of the goddess Bhavani, so was an attempt made to impose upon Guru Govind the authority of the goddess Kali. A human sacrifice is said to have been performed with the help of Brahmans from Benares. Anyhow, it happily failed to impress the honest and fearless heart of the great leader who but for this would have dedicated his followers and kingdom to priestcraft and idolatry instead of raising them from their degradation. The Guru refused to be victimised. As he said in his dying address, he preferred to attach his followers to the skirt of the Immortal God, and entrusted them to Him only, and called upon everyone of them, "ever to remain under His protection and trust no one besides."

The chief articles of faith and discipline of the Sikhs are: (1) They must believe only in the One Immortal God. (2) They must not worship idols, cemeteries, trees or spirits. (3) They must ever help the poor and protect those who sought their protection. (4) They must have no distinctions of caste or class or profession and must deem themselves members of one family. (5) They must practise the use of arms, must wear arms constantly, must never flee before an enemy, and must be prepared to die for the cause of truth and justice. (6) They must lead a pure life of chastity, moderation, discipline, benevolent actions and dedication to God and the nation. (7) The Central Committee called the Khalsa was to be the final authority in all matters. (8) The teachings of the ten Gurus embodied in the Granth was to be their religious text. (9) Any five Sikhs could meet and give initiation to others and take them into the fold.

(10) Women were to have all the consolations of religion which men enjoyed. (11) Every one was to live by honest labour and shun the company of idlers and wicked men. (12) As a sign of the new life they had entered, all Sikhs were to be known as Singhs (lions).

In a short time, 80,000 men became his followers and the number went on increasing. A large number of Brahmans and other twice-born Hindus deserted the Sikh-fold when he insisted on the observance of these disciplines. Guru Govind welcomed the departure of the incorrigibles who clung to their old customs and castes, and in their place, admitted thousands of the humble peasants and hill-tribes who were thus enabled to realise their manhood, and become the respectable citizens of the Khalsa State. "Govind Singh thus appealed to the eternal instincts of equality, liberty and brotherhood, broke for ever the caste prejudices and received into the Khalsa people of all classes who had hitherto been debarred from bearing arms and participating in religion. The Singhs of the Khalsa felt themselves at once elevated and equal to the proud and martial Rajputs. Personal pride and strength were infused into them, and Sikhism knitted them together into one common brotherhood, animated by a common faith, one social life and national longing. The effect of these new teachings, it is said, was immediate and profound. The Sikhs began to manifest great chivalry and courage and live in sweet social love and harmony among themselves. Wherever there was oppression or cruelty, the Sikhs were there, and with ready heart and brave arms, helped the persecuted. Among themselves, they lived like

brothers, they used to feed one another, shampoo one another when tired, bathe one another, wash one another's clothes, and one Sikh always met another with a smile on his face and love in his heart."*

Guru Nanak caught the spirit of the age and perceived the correct lines of regeneration and unification of the people. Guru Govind built on the foundations so nobly laid an enduring nationality. He infused a new enthusiasm for freedom, democracy, righteousness and self-sacrifice into the minds of a vanquished people, he roused their native potentialities which lay dormant under the killing weight of Mughal despotism and the social ignominy of Hinduism, he filled their humble lives with a glorious yearning to live and die for the sake of truth, righteousness and country, he restored to them their natural simplicity of beliefs and customs from the degradation and corruption which surrounded them, and kindled an inextinguishable passion for brave deeds, all of which made the Sikhs a distinct people, a model and inspiration to the lowly and oppressed of all times, and a memorable contrast to the Brahman empire of Maharashtra.

But the peril is still there. The Sikhs, along with the rest of India, are sinking under the curse of Brahmanism.

*Page 22, Guru Govind, by G. A. Natesan & Co.

THE MENACE OF

HINDU IMPERIALISM

[UNDER BRITISH RULE]

CHAPTER XV

BRAHMANISM FORTIFIED UNDER THE BRITISH

The East India Company was a trading corporation and their first and foremost consideration was profit. When by slow degrees, they came to administer rich and large territories inhabited by a people who were no less civilised than themselves, they took the only wise course that could be taken then, of interfering as little as possible with their traditional life and religion and confining their own administrative activity to such measures as directly or indirectly tended to increase the profits. To them India was but a large estate to be managed in the best interests of the shareholders, who cared for their annual dividends and not for the policies and principles of the just administration of a conquered people. As was but natural, the Company took into their confidence the leading men of the country, the Brahmans, and employed them in the various departments of administration and business.

The learned Abbe Dubois wrote thus in 1816 : "The Brahmans have also been clever enough to work their way into favour with the great European

power that now governs India. They occupy the highest and the most lucrative posts in the different administrative boards and government offices as well as in the judicial courts of the various districts. In fact there is no branch of public administration in which they have not made themselves indispensable . . . . But woe to the European head of the office who does not keep the strictest watch over the conduct of these said subordinates or who places implicit confidence in them. He will soon find himself the victim of his own negligence, with his position seriously compromised."*

It was so from the very beginning of the British connection with India and the character and policy of the government has been influenced in numerous unforeseen and subtle ways by the predominant voice of the Brahmans, and it cannot be said even now that it has ceased to be a powerful factor in determining the fate of the country.

The co-operation between the Company's servants and the Brahmans was nowhere more hearty and intimate than in the management of the rich temples. Many causes contributed to this strange alliance between a Christian people and the pagan priests. The temples, especially those of South India, had been built by successive Hindu rulers and always remained under their management. They were important sources of revenue. When the country passed from one conqueror to another, the control of the temples also changed hands, and even Muhammadan rulers are seen to have patronised them for the sake of the annual income they yielded. "The offerings of rich devotees which are divided

*Page 293, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, by Abbe Dubois.

among the priests in proportion to their rank and dignity are sometimes so considerable in the principal temples that they have aroused the cupidity of the princes of the country, particularly of the Muhammadans. These latter as a sort of compensation for tolerating a religion which they abhorred thought fit to take possession of more than half of these offerings." So wrote the Abbe Dubois.

The learned Frenchman was mistaken in thinking that the cupidity of the princes was the only justification for appropriating a share of the profits of temple-craft. The princes had a right to the revenue, as the temples really belonged to them, and the Brahmans were only either partners or agents in the business. It was so under Hindu rule; it was so under the Muhammadans; it was so under the English Company until as we shall see presently, the British Government of its own accord washed its hands clean of this dirty affair. In the Thirumala Tirupati Devasthanam case, the Madras High Court observed on the facts as follows: "The most striking feature has yet to be indicated. Up to 1843, when the defendants' predecessor was appointed trustee of the temples, all surplus revenues of the temples after defraying the cost of the temple service, were appropriated by the sovereign power. This practice the British Government inherited from its Muhammadan and Hindu predecessors and it has prevailed from time immemorial. The surplus revenue thus appropriated amounted at the beginning of the last century, to something like two lakhs of rupees annually.* The Company stepped into the shoes of

*Page 41, Right of Temple Entry, Mr. P. Chidaimbaram Pillai, B.A., B.L.

the previous rulers and the Brahmans welcomed them, as their own position became more secure and acquired added dignity and power by the patronage of the new government.

In 1803 when the English took possession of Orissa, it is said that the oracle of the Puri Jagannath Temple proclaimed that it was the desire of the deity that the temple too should be controlled by the Company, and the latter undertook to maintain the temple buildings, pay the Brahmans and do everything for the service of the deity as was customary. In the very first year, the institution yielded a net profit to the Company of Rs. 1,35,000. Buddha Gaya was a famous centre of pilgrimage and the Company introduced a pilgrim tax which in some years produced a revenue of from two to three lakhs of rupees. Similar taxes were collected in other pilgrim centres like, Tirupati, Kashipur, Sarkara, Sambol, etc., and the net taking amounted on an average to £75,000 and upwards annually. In Conjeevaram the Siva temple was in ruins and the people did not care to repair it. An English official induced the Company to carry out the necessary repairs and himself gave a gift to the temple. On occasions of temple festivals and processions, the civil and military officers of the Company were compelled to honour them by their presence and the Government sent through them its gifts to the Brahmans. In times of drought Brahmans were appointed and paid by the Company to pray to the gods for rain. In those early days, English wives were not allowed to come to India and the Company's servants sought the company of Indian mistresses. Some of them are said to have built

private temples for their mistresses. The dancing girls of the temples must have been another inducement for these Christian gentlemen to take a hearty interest in their proper management according to the ancient practices.

"Even pagan festivals which had dropped into oblivion were revived and all sense of shame was lost. The management of the property of one temple after another was taken over by the Company; its officials were then responsible for everything; the construction of new idol-cars, new idols, the appointment and remuneration of the Brahmans, painters, musicians, rice-boilers, and watchmen, and that their cup might be full, even the temple filles-de-joie, the Nautch girls received their pay from English officials. At one time in 1858, long after the fight against the entire system had been commenced, 8,292 idols in the Madras Presidency received annually 8,76,780 rupees; in the Bombay Presidency 26,589 temples and idols received 6,98,593 rupees, and in the total area of the Company's jurisdiction, 17,15,586 rupees were annually spent in the support of idolatry."* The work of the Hindu reformers, who had been preaching against temple-craft and other vices and weaning the intelligent section from those superstitions, was all undone by the enthusiasm of the English patrons of Brahmanism.

"Idol worship in India was on the down-grade. Many temples were openly falling into decay, the temple treasures were squandered by covetous Brahmans, and the entire idol system had no strength to raise itself up again. Its dissolution seemed impending. Then came the government and rebuilt

*Page IV of the Appendix, *vide* Right of Temple Entry, P. C. Pillai.

the temples, took over the temple property and saw to it that the idol-festivals and processions were celebrated with their pristine splendour. The whole structure of Hinduism put on a new dignity and new prestige so that in the eyes of the people it appeared to be as it were born again. Therefore, the number of pilgrims, in spite of high pilgrim taxes, increased at famous shrines to an unbelievable extent, the Brahmans came to be regarded as government officials, and the natives were convinced that betwixt the Hindu religion and that of the government, no difference at all existed. A powerful instrument of proof was thus placed in the hands of the Brahmans themselves, enabling them to justify their false religion in the eyes of the deluded populace."* The Company's servants were not concerned with the propagation of any religion. The temples and their paraphernalia satisfied their human cravings for enjoying life in this distant country, where without their wives and children, they must have felt miserable indeed, and if any justification was required for open participation in pagan ceremonies, it was furnished in the form of substantial profits to the Company.

Placed in such high and intimate favour with the English rulers, the Brahmans were not slow to use their influence to strengthen the chains of caste on which, after all, hung their entire system of social and religious domination. The Company's government found in the caste arrangement a very potent instrument for keeping the Hindus submissive by the terror of social degradation and excommunication more dreaded by them than death itself. In 1767

*Page 346 (Basel Mission Magazine, 1858,), Right of Temple Entry.

the Company established a Caste Kutchery with extensive powers of interference with the social and even domestic life of the Hindus. One of the charges against Warren Hastings was that he used the caste courts to terrorise his opponents into submission. Even the highest Hindu in the land feared an adverse judgment of these tribunals, as that would practically mean his social death. In his Impeachment of Warren Hastings, Burke referring to these courts said: "He has put his own menial servant, he has enthroned him, I say, on the first seat of ecclesiastical jurisdiction which has to decide on the castes of all those people including their rank, their family, their honour, their happiness here, and in their opinion, their salvation hereafter." To make available a code of Brahmanical laws for the guidance of the judges and lawyers, Warren Hastings had a digest made by several Brahman juris-consults from the old Sanskrit law books, and this was translated into English.

The Indian Census Report of 1911 contains some quotations from a book written in 1817 regarding the dreadful consequences of expulsion from caste which was one of the punishments inflicted by the caste tribunals. "Expulsion from the caste which is the penalty inflicted on those who are guilty of infringing the accustomed rules or of any other offence which would bring disgrace on the tribe, if it remained unavenged, is in truth an unsupportable punishment. It is a kind of civil excommunication which debars the unhappy object of it from all intercourse whatever with his fellow creatures. He is a man, as it were, dead to the world. He is no longer in the society of men. By losing his caste, the Hindu

is bereft of friends and relations, and often of his wife and children who will rather forsake him than share in his miserable lot. No one dares to eat with him or even to pour him out a drop of water. If he has marriageable daughters, they are shunned. No other girls can be approached by his sons. Wherever he appears, he is scorned and pointed out as an outcaste. If he sinks under the grievous curse, his body is suffered to rot on the place where he dies."

Sir William Jones was appointed judge of the Supreme Court of Judicature at Fort William in 1784. He became one of the foremost Orientalists and the founder of the Asiatic Society. It is said of him that every day he used to talk with Sanskrit Pandits to study and discuss with them the contents of old Sanskrit manuscripts. The learned judge felt so much enthusiasm for the Brahmanical laws that he himself translated the Manu Shastra into English. In their laudable desire to do justice to the people of India, eminent men like Sir William Jones brought out from their oblivion spurious and unjust Shastras and gave them the status of authoritative works on Hindu law, and they looked to the Brahman priests as their final interpreters. The early English administrators and judges must have looked to the eyes of the champions of Brahmanism like a new race of Kshatriyas sent by God to restore the declining authority of the Shastras; so complete was their triumph.

Another vital measure which irretrievably betrayed the Hindu community into the hands of the priests was the relinquishment by the Government of the control and management of temples which, as

a result, virtually passed into the hands of the Brahmans. So long as the Government was in management, there was at least the gratification that the right of all Hindus to worship as of old was not interefered with. When Europeans could freely enter the temples and supervise everything that was going on there, no Hindu could reasonably be prevented from having free access to them. But when the control was transferred to local trustees, Brahman priests began to have everything their own way, and in a few years numerous previously unknown restrictions came to be imposed upon the worshippers, a large section of whom were deprived of their immemorial right to enter the temple on the ground of being low castes. Until 1863 the Revenue Boards continued to be in charge of the temples in their respective jurisdictions, and it was by Act XX of 1863 that the Government transferred their control into the hands of trustees. "When the Act XX of 1863 enabled the Government to divest itself of the management of religious endowments, it so happened that the Hindu society, then as now, was so constituted, that it enabled the Brahman, directly or indirectly, to take upon himself the management of these Hindu religious endowments."*

The ancient Shastras never contemplated to lay down law for all the hundreds of tribes and castes of India, with customs, beliefs and characteristics as wide apart as the poles. They attempted primarily to regulate the society of the small group of Aryan settlers of the North. With the establishment of the British law courts, the provisions of the Shastras came to be extended and applied to all the peoples

*Page 51, Right of Temple Entry.

indiscriminately. As Mr. J. C. Ghosh remarks in his Tagore Law Lectures, "However that may be, Hindu law has been practically extended to all Indians who are not Muhammadans nor Christians." This involved great injustice, and the deprivation of the rights of certain communities, especially when cases came to be decided by Brahman judges or English judges with little knowledge of the society and religion of the Indians.

The history of the South Indian temples furnishes an instance of the great wrong thus perpetuated. Temple worship was prohibited to the Brahman from the days of Manu who classified temple-priests along with liquor vendors. The Brahmans rarely founded any temples. Most of them were built and endowed by non-Brahman princes and chiefs and flourished with the help of contributions from non-Brahman devotees. They were built in accordance with the rules contained in the Agamas and not the Brahmanical Shastras. The Agamas do not recognise caste differences in the matter of worship. Any person of any caste who has received initiation, and none else, can officiate as priests. Even the lowest untouchable could enter the temple for worship provided he had received initiation. In accordance with the spirit of the Agamas, all caste-Hindus and non-caste-Hindus were treated as one people before the deity. The sixty-three Saivite saints whose images are set up and worshipped in all important temples belonged to all castes, from the Pariah to the Brahman. In his "History of the Tamils" Mr. P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar of the Madras University says, "The Agamas did not recognise the four castes. . . . The Agamas on the contrary, were

open to all men, so much so that even to-day, a Pariah who has received Sivadiksha can give this Diksha (initiation) to a Brahman and thus become the Guru of the latter."*

This original liberal character of the South Indian temples was completely destroyed when they fell under the influence of the Brahmans. The rules of the Agamas were ignored; courts upheld the Brahmanical Shastras and wrongly applied them to these non-Brahman institutions. Many things were authorised which were diametrically opposed to the principles of the original foundation. The right of the non-Brahmans to officiate as priests was lost in most places; and what was the unkindest cut of all, at the present day, a majority of the descendants of those who built and endowed the temples are either rigorously excluded from their precincts, or permitted only to approach them subject to humiliating restrictions. The British courts have contributed not a little to this perversion of the ancient arrangement. It is just as if a Protestant Church in London had been placed under the charge of a Catholic priest, and the Protestant congregation had been obliged not only to accept service from him, but had been relegated to the back benches, the front ones being reserved for the Catholics.

Even greater injustice was involved in the classification of the people in accordance with the rules of Brahman Shastras. The elaborate system of administration and revenue, civil, criminal and executive, with its offices and officials from the village peon up to the highest representative of His

*Page 66, Right of Temple Entry.

Majesty, comprehending all departments of the nation's life, social, religious, political and economic, required the recording and fixing of the caste and sub-caste of every individual with almost superstitious exactness and hair-splitting fineness. No child could get admission to a *pial* school without his caste and sub-caste being stated in the application; no document could be registered by the Registrar unless it contained a full description of the caste of the parties; a police report or a court proceeding was considered imperfect if it contained no statement of the castes of the persons involved. From birth to death, the Hindu was forced in every dealing with the Government to reiterate his social degradation. Some of the poorer classes who did not know what all this meant, accepted whatever rank was assigned to them in the gradation of castes by their high placed masters. Sometimes even influential communities were, without their knowledge and consent, brought under low caste groups by officers and historians. The case of the Nayars of Malabar is typical. From time immemorial, this community had been the ruling and warrior class, and even to-day are proud of their martial heredity, distinctive culture, and high level of advancement. Their customs, beliefs, rights and mutual relations were not governed by the Brahman Shastras. In spite of all this, they came to be put in the category of Sudras. But the Nayars of Travancore protested against this insulting innovation and the Government had to recognise the justice of their contentions. They were thus saved from enforced Sudrahood.

Hindu speakers find fault with Christian missionaries for encouraging mass conversion. They

seem to forget that the Hindus became Hindus by a sort of mass conversion or mass classification by the Muhammadans, and the various castes acquired their status by a similar process of mass classification behind their backs by the Brahman first and lastly by the British Government. Sectarian legislative enactments and judicial decisions based on so-called immemorial customs, fixing the rights of succession, inheritance, family management, marriage, etc., of different groups gave the finishing touches to the caste structure. There are to-day, among the Hindus, not less than three thousand castes and a much larger number of sub-castes who have received due recognition at the hands of the census officers.

As a result of the Government taking upon itself the authority to define the caste and status and rights of the various social groups, reformers and religious teachers, who could do much, by way of amalgamation and abolition of restrictions in olden days, have become completely helpless. No saint or saviour to-day can alter the status of any community effectively if the Government sticks to its policy of pious non-interference, which in effect means active enforcement of existing conditions.

One more thing was required to give caste a positive economic value in life, and that was supplied by the latest arrangement, of course made as a result of popular agitation, to distribute the patronage of the Government, to give preference in schools and colleges, to constitute election constituencies and lastly to decide questions of constitutional reform on the basis of caste divisions and the claims and opinions of the respective caste groups.

When the entire life of the Indian nation had

been thus grotesquely bedecked in the multi-coloured robe of a gaudy comedian, there came from the West learned antiquarians to crown him with hearty congratulations on the beauty of his magnificent apparel. The caste system, which has made a gifted people the laughing stock of the civilised world, is praised as a wonderful cultural achievement but for which Indians would have sunk into barbarism. The clever patching together of the disconnected shreds and pieces, the masterly arrangement of the variegated colours to form a unique pattern, the appropriateness of the long tail of rough khaddar and rougher Harijans trailing on the ground at the base of the brighter hues like the knee-crawling prisoners of Jallianwallah, the bulky and serviceable pants pressed almost down to the knees representing the Sudras, the elevated frontage of the abdomen marking the capacious granary of the Vaishyas, the long losely hanging sleeves with hidden claws denoting the exalted origin and great power of the Kshatriyas, the tapering cap of jolly wisdom and divine self-esteem perched on the scoundrel's head symbolising the ancient Brahmans and the other tiny patches, stitches and holes and numberless little decorations, each representing a beautiful caste-group, constitute together, in the opinion of some antiquarians, the most fascinating figure, the most edifying phenomenon, the most ancient remnant of human civilisation ever presented to a modern audience! They split their cheeks with congratulations and shout, "Hail! India once more to the front." Would they like to introduce the caste costume into their own country?

Let us briefly enumerate the gradual stages by

which Britain helped, in all good spirit and with the best of intentions, the Brahman regime to be permanently imposed upon the submissive people of India who put their whole trust in British justice and British democracy.

Firstly they raised the Brahmans to the highest posts of power, profit and confidence.

Secondly they chivalrously championed the cause of the decaying temples, idolatrous festivals, and charming dancing girls with the hearty patronage and protection of the Company's government, to the mutual advantage and recreation of the Company and the priests.

Thirdly they established the Caste Kutcheries, the most dreaded tribunal of the Hindus.

Fourthly they unearthed from their oblivion Manu Shastra and other spurious texts, which the vast majority of the Hindus had never heard of, and elevated them to the status of authoritative works of Hindu law.

Fifthly they handed over the temples to the control of trustees, and thus facilitated the aggrandisement of Brahmanism and deprivation of the rights of the lower orders.

Sixthly through judicial decisions and administrative classification and even by legal enactments, the so-called Hindu law has been applied to all Indians who are not Christians or Muhammadans.

Seventhly they gave caste distinctions royal recognition, state protection, enhanced dignity, positive value and significance, and even political importance.

Eighthly they blasted the hopes of reformers and teachers by making it impossible for them to alter

the status quo by any practicable means.

Ninthly in the name of non-interference, they have actively strengthened and perpetuated the evils of society which it was their duty to fight.

Lastly Christian antiquarians have added insult to injury by flattering the non-British castes and unchristian idolatry as meritorious cultural achievements to be preserved for the delectation of humanity.

There is only one more thing which Britain has to do to discharge her trust to the dumb millions of her subjects and to fill the cup of unhappy India's suicidal bliss, and that is to hand over the seal and emblem of the Indian Empire to the temple-priests and give a farewell kiss or kick to the blissful fool Independent India.

We are not unmindful of the numerous blessings which British rule has brought to India—education, science, industry, organisation, and above all political ideals and institutions and Christian brotherhood. These forces have worked and are working silently on the Hindu mind, and in proper time, let us hope, the Divine Artist will complete His picture. We are here concerned only with those administrative acts which have strengthened the grip of Brahmanism on India, to the detriment of her national aspirations and of the stability of British rule. For the most damaging consequence, so far as Britain is concerned, of the policy so far pursued, has been the widening of the gulf which separates Britain from India by the emphasising of her follies, weaknesses, peculiarities and superstitions, and making Britain appear increasingly alien to the spirit of the Hindu, and also by creating an impression that Britain's policy is

deliberately detrimental to India's progress. If the Indian Government had consistently followed the policy enunciated by the great British premiers of the 19th century and if it had remained true to the trust reposed in them, not so much by the people of India, as by the democracy of Britain and the religion of Christ, if they had used their presence in the midst of this ancient but unfortunate people not to foster their eccentricities and iniquities, but to inculcate into their national life and institutions those universal principles of freedom, equality and brotherhood which are the life and soul of all true national greatness, Britain would have had greater chances of long-standing reconciliation with Indian aspirations and could have facilitated in a larger measure a permanent meeting of the East and the West in the happy blending of the two cultures for the good of all humanity. It is not yet too late, and let us hope that the lessons of the past will not be lost upon our rulers.

THE MENACE OF

HINDU IMPERIALISM

[HOW INDIA IS KEPT IN CHAINS EVEN NOW]

CHAPTER XVI

HINDUS PERISH UNDER HINDU RAJ

TRAVANCORE—COCHIN—KASHMIR

The imperial states of the modern world built up their social, economic and political structure with the object of securing their own power and keeping the conquered peoples subject and weak. We often charge the white masters of coloured races with having haughtily refused to mingle with their subjects, with passing discriminatory laws, with denying citizenship and opportunities of enlightenment and progress to the weaker race, with suppressing their national aspirations and so organising the entire state as to prevent them from ever realising their full manhood. The ancient Brahman masters of Hindu India, who had established themselves as a separate nation with all the exclusiveness, arrogance, selfishness and cruelty which we associate with the white imperialists, did exactly what we accuse the latter of having done. No imperial power ever imposed on a weaker people a more ruthless and soul-destroying domination than the Brahmans did on the rest of the Hindus, and no race of superior men ever arrogated to themselves such haughty supremacy and false greatness as they.

When the ancient priests set themselves up as an exclusive caste of Brahmans in order to establish their self-assumed superiority, they had to inflict degradation on all other Hindus and press them down to various layers of subordination. They had to keep the people divided, disunited, weak and degraded, to deny them learning, refinement and opportunities of advancement, and permanently and unalterably to tie them down to a low status in society. The Hindu social organisation based on hereditary castes was evolved by the Brahmans with the above object and enforced on the people with the help of foreign conquerors. Consistently with their pretensions to be a superior race, the Brahmans could not follow the ordinary avocations for a means of livelihood. All the avenues of acquiring wealth by honest work were closed to them by their own caste-pride, at least nominally. The trades and crafts were considered as unbecoming to the Brahmans. They were therefore obliged to build up a system of exploitation for procuring wealth from those who fought and worked for it. The entire popular religious organisation of the Hindus, including the temples, the pilgrimages, the festivals, penances, rituals, secret cults, ceremonies, Mantras and Tantras, and other items of the huge network of priestcraft, was primarily meant for the profit of the Brahmans and the entanglement of the rest. Hardly any of them were intended to ennoble the life of the devotees or to help them in their struggles. Many of them were positively degrading, and destroyed the peoples' spiritual perceptions. The large majority of the ever-growing community of hereditary Brahmans could sustain their lives only by the

propagation of a social order and religion which kept the other Hindus in the condition of hewers of wood and drawers of water, morally and intellectually castrated.

But there were great souls among the Brahmans also. They protested and revolted against these deceptions. There were great philosophers who condemned the false system of castes and priestcraft. Inspired teachers appeared again and again and exposed the futility of the priest-imposed religion. The Brahman priests had to counteract all these redeeming influences if they and their system were to survive. They had to justify their castes and idolatry and rituals against these attacks and were obliged to keep on producing an endless series of spurious Shastras and authorities—Sutras, Puranas, commentaries, Mahatmyams, philosophies, esoteric meanings and so forth. They had to tamper with the ancient works of the sages, distort and misinterpret the original texts, interpolate new matter, concoct new works in the name of ancient authors and practise similar deceptions, because their very existence depended on keeping the Hindu masses hypnotised. Caste, priestcraft and false Shastras followed one after another in an inevitable succession.

An exploiting nation can thrive only on the disunion, weakness, ignorance, mutual rivalries and superstitions of the exploited. Just as the system of hereditary castes condemned the vast majority of the Hindus to perpetual exploitation, so did it condemn the hereditary Brahmans, probably against their own better nature and impulses, to lead the life of heartless exploiters, compelled by sheer necessity to cultivate a culture of untruths, deceptions,

selfishness, injustice, immorality, hatred and oppression. In the ordinary course of things, after hereditary priesthood had become their lot in life, they could not have done anything else. Thus in course of time both the masters and the slaves lost their souls. They learned to find wisdom in their follies, sanctity in their superstitions, truth in their deceptions and glory in their ignominy. Even the best among them are now unable to rise above the slave mentality.

The Hindu State was similarly an instrument for the preservation of the master-slave culture of Brahmanism. It existed not for the advancement of the Hindu peoples, but for their suppression and exploitation for the profit of the Brahmans and their partisans. Under the rule of the Hindu Rajas, the Hindu masses never prospered. They invariably lost their manliness, were irretrievably divided among themselves, and gradually driven out of the Hindu fold to the embrace of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj and other religious communities. This was the fate of the Hindus in the past, and the same process continues to-day, except where non-Hindu influences have directly or indirectly made the life of the Hindus tolerable within the Hindu society. We shall illustrate the general result of Hindu rule by the history of a typical Hindu state.

Travancore is one of the most progressive Hindu states in all India and is second to none in the matter of the spread of education and the development of political life. If we make use of the history of Travancore for the purpose of the present chapter no one can justly say that we have picked an

exceptionally bad instance of an insignificant and backward state. His Highness Sree Bala Rama Varmah, the present ruler of Travancore, has immortalised his name by the famous Temple Entry Proclamation, which by one stroke of the pen annihilated a universal and deep-rooted superstition of the Hindus and offered to the down-trodden Hindu communities the largest measure of liberty, hope and self-respect which any Hindu reformer has succeeded in giving for more than a thousand years. His Highness has to be particularly congratulated on the absolute frankness of his personal attitude which was characterised throughout by an ardent desire to make the reform as complete as possible without the reservations and qualifications with which orthodox governments generally diminish the benefits of their own self-laudatory innovations. The Maharaja has evinced greater personal interest than the people themselves in the liberation of the Hindu masses and in carrying out the spirit of the new order even in the domestic life of the royal family, and if more has not been achieved in the direction of Hindu consolidation, the blame certainly cannot be attributed to him. On the other hand, though the proclamation evoked universal rejoicings in the state, not to speak of the encomiums which poured in from all parts of the world, it cannot be said that His Highness has received from his own Hindu subjects that degree of intelligent and organised co-operation in the working of the arrangement or the extending of its principles to all aspects of Hindu life which an ardent soul like him had reason to expect. Instead, the bonfire lighted to celebrate the opening of the temples to all Hindus without reservations, was

practically converted into a signal of revolt and rioting, in which many of his Hindu subjects took a leading part, exhibiting all the ugliness of disunion and communal jealousies and the incapacity to entertain sustained loyalty to any leader however great, which are the inherent weaknesses of all Hindu communities poisoned by the caste-spirit.

Within a few months of the epoch-making proclamation, which should have prompted all sensible Hindus to unite in homage and strengthen the hands of the ruler for further measures of reform and reconstruction, we find the whole state plunged into a condition of lawlessness and mob violence in which the Hindus, along with the non-Hindus, took part with a recklessness amounting almost to fanaticism. The conflagration was started in the name of noble ideals of responsible government, and many well meaning workers were involved in it, but one who felt the pulse of the movement could easily detect below the cloak of respectable protestations the unquenchable spirit of communal jealousies which exaggerated and fanned into flame the smouldering embers of economic discontent, and roused the feelings of the masses against a government which undoubtedly deserved the patience and co-operation of its subjects more than any previous government of the state or any other contemporary government in India. It must have been felt as an ungrateful stab by the young Maharaja who will surely take time to recover from its disheartening effects. The ill-advised agitation, besides bringing out the constitutional incapacity of the Hindu communities to unite even under the most favourable circumstances, has served to delay the hand of progress by

antagonising the forces of reform and creating an atmosphere of distrust between the ruler and the ruled which was unknown in modern Travancore.

The people too were unwilling victims of their hereditary environment. No amount of tinkering can, for long, unite the Hindus in devotion to a common cause or person so long as caste differences persist. The most liberal reforms will not make a Kshatriya Rajah loved by all his Hindu subjects in that spirit of community of religion and social affinity with which a Christian or a Muhammadan people look upon their sovereigns. The majority of his Hindu subjects must for ever remain alienated from him in their minds as irrevocably outside the caste. An unbridgeable gulf separates the Hindu ruler from his subjects. The greatest saint, reformer, teacher and nation-builder Travancore has produced since the days of the first Sree Sankaracharya was undoubtedly the late Sree Narayana Guruswamy. In any other country he would have been universally acclaimed as a saviour and prophet. But in a Hindu state caste envelops in dark clouds even such great souls and prevents their light from penetrating into the open world. When a Rishi like him could not overcome the caste prejudices of a Hindu state, who else can ever hope to do so? The most beloved of Maharajas must remain an alien in caste to the huge majority of his Hindu subjects, however much the civilities of modern life may cover up the feeling of separateness. No Dewan could have acted more courageously for the welfare of the state in the critical situation which confronted it, and none could have more successfully saved the Hindus from their internal dissentions than Sir C. P. Ramaswamy

Iyer, the present Dewan. But he had his caste, he could never rise above it ; the people could never for a moment get the notion out of their heads that he belonged to a caste. He was victimised like Sree Narayana Guruswamy and the Maharaja, not by the people but by caste. History will record the fact that the greatest Hindu Dewan of modern Travancore received the greatest opposition from the Hindu people. Mahatma Gandhi has not been openly disowned by the Hindus because he has refrained from directly attacking the castes; but when it comes to real concerted action in social life in addition to putting up a fight with foreign rulers, he too will have either to denounce the evil and fight it, or else fail in the ultimate attainment of true freedom and unity for India and the Hindus.

The history of Hindu states like Travancore and Cochin furnishes ample evidence that a Hindu state is ultimately detrimental to the interests of the Hindu people and Hindu religion. It may appear a paradox that Hindus and Hinduism are safer under non-Hindu rule than under Hindu rule. The most orthodox Hindu states are exactly the places where the Hindus have declined steadily and the non-Hindus gained in strength and numbers. In British India, the Hindus cherish some degree of emancipation from Hindu rule, since the state is non-Hindu and public life has been considerably redeemed from Hindu influences and is becoming increasingly cosmopolitan. They are able to show some sort of united front in politics, because they feel the equality of subjection to a non-Hindu power which is silently exerting the influence of its democratic ideas in all spheres of life and thus raising the Hindu mind out of its natural

caste psychology. In the Hindu states, the Hindus are destined to steady decline and ultimate annihilation, unless the Hindu ideals are one by one abandoned in order to make room for those of self-respect and freedom.

Martanda Varma Maharaja who ruled from 1729 A. D. for about 30 years is the maker of modern Travancore. After a protracted struggle with the turbulent feudal chiefs, he consolidated his power over the area now known as Travancore. He was aided in his conquests by an able Brahman Dewan, Ramayyan Dalawa. Brahmanism which had been retreating to the south before the Muhammadan invaders found an asylum in Travancore, and the state came to be known as the land of charity, which of course meant charity to the Brahmans. "Wanje Martanda Perumal, who assumed authority in 1729 A. D. and held it nearly for thirty years was most successful in the subjection of his neighbours though at the same time severe and despotic in the government of his people. He resigned himself entirely to the guidance of the Brahmans, for whose benefit he established a liberal though somewhat improvident expenditure."* Under the influence of the Brahman minister, the great Maharaja whose name was a terror to his enemies, abjectly submitted to Brahman domination, and like Shivaji pledged his kingdom to the Brahmans. "He took three steps by which the whole state was surrendered, bound hand and foot to the Brahman. The first was the surrender of the whole country to god Sree Padmanabha, the deity in Trivandrum, by which the ruler assumed the role of the vassal of that deity, and

*Page 193, Right of Temple Entry, by P. Chidambaram Pillai.

the land tenure itself was based upon this act of the ruler.

"Secondly Oottupuras or feeding houses for the Brahmans were established throughout the state for the daily feed of the Brahman.

"Thirdly the institution of Murajapam once every six years for feeding the Brahmans at a fabulous cost. This was supposed to remove the sins of the ruler in having burnt down temples during the wars . . . . The fact is no temples were burnt and it was merely an excuse for the Brahman to feed at public expense . . . . The impoverishment of the people and the country did not stop here. The people of the state were taxed mercilessly and all the available public revenue came to be dumped in a cellar alleged to be situate beneath the Pagoda at Trivandrum."*

"The large sum of money amounting to upward of thirty-four lakhs of rupees which was the surplus in the treasury and which had been transferred to the Palace Treasury was all spent in vows and religious ceremonies at the Pagoda, and the Palace Treasury also soon became empty."†

"In every month several days were devoted to the fulfilment of the vows at the Pagoda and on each occasion a large sum of money was given to the shrine. On one occasion the amount was one lakh of Surat rupees which was heaped in front of the idol of Sree Padmanabhaswamy and the Maharaja took the numerous bags containing the rupees and poured the contents into the silver vessels which were kept there for the purpose. This work engaged

*Pages 193-195, *vide* Right of Temple Entry.
†Page 197, *vide* Right of Temple Entry.

His Highness about an hour and he had the determination of mind to go through the labour even in his delicate state of health."* The State Treasury was so depleted by the reckless expenditure for temples and the Brahmans that the successor of Martanda Varma had no money to discharge his obligations to the British Government. A loan was, therefore, taken from the said temple and it was repaid with fifty per cent interest.

The Izhavas, who formed nearly seven lakhs out of the total Hindu population of 25½ lakhs (1921) together with the other non-caste Hindus, formed a large majority. They were kept out of the temples, denied admission to schools and public examinations, denied admission into the public service, branded as untouchables, without free use of roads, public tanks and wells and other public institutions. In 1860 when Sir T. Madhava Rao was the Dewan, one of them wanted to sit for the public examination for the selection of Vakils for the High Court and had paid the fees. He was not however permitted to sit owing, it was said, to the objection of the caste Hindus. Till 1895 the Government used to refuse admission to these people to the Government schools. In 1886 the British Resident failed to obtain a place in the state service in Cochin and Travancore for a graduate belonging to this community who afterwards became a Deputy Collector in the British service.

In 1891 a "Malayali Memorial" signed by more than ten thousand representative Travancoreans was submitted to the Government praying for the recognition of the right of the Hindu Izhavas

*Page 196, *vide* Right of Temple Entry.

to enter the Government service. The memorialists only pleaded that these Hindus might be allowed the privileges enjoyed by the Christians and the Muhammadans. But the Government could not sanction the prayer owing to the opposition of the caste Hindus. In these and other ways a majority of the Hindus were forcibly kept out from the benefits of civilisation.

The numerous other ways in which the life of the lower classes is made intolerable in Hindu society are too well known to require reiteration. One characteristic incident may however be described, as it throws much light on the rigour of the serfdom to which they were subjected by the high caste Hindus supported by the Government. The females of the low castes were no tallowed to wear the upper garment in the fashion of the high caste females. Thousands of them had become converts to Christianity under the influence of the London Missionary Society. The Christian females began to wear the upper cloth like the high caste ladies. This created a sensation, and led to conflicts between the caste Hindus and the Christians who were joined by the still unconverted low caste peoples. The Government ordered that the old practice should not be altered. The Christian missionaries took the matter in appeal to the Madras Government in 1859 when Sir Charles Trevelyan was the Governor. The latter wrote in strong terms to the British Resident: "I have seldom met with a case in which not only truth and justice but every feeling of our common humanity are so entirely on one side. The whole civilised world would cry shame upon us if we did not make a firm stand on such an

occasion. If anything could make this line of conduct incumbent on us, it would be the extraordinary fact that persecution of a singularly personal and delicate kind is attempted to be justified by a Royal Proclamation, the special object of which was to assure to Her Majesty's Indian subjects liberty of thought and action, so long as they did not interfere with the just right of others. I should fail in respect to Her Majesty, if I attempted to describe the feeling with which she must regard the use made against her own sex of the promises of protection so graciously accorded by her. It will be your duty to impress these views on His Highness the Maharaja and to point out to him that such prohibitions as those conveyed in the circular order of May 1814 or in the Proclamation of 3rd February, 1829, are unsuited to the present age and unworthy of an enlightened prince."*

The result of Hindu rule was that in a few decades, the most orthodox Hindu state became more Christian than any other part of India. According to the Census of 1901 the Christian population of Travancore was only six lakhs. By 1931 it rose to 17 lakhs or 33 per cent of the total population. As the official historian of Travancore wrote : "We have the rare phenomenon that the conservative Hindu state of Travancore is much less Hindu than even the Muhammadan State of Hyderabad."

The author of the "Right of Temple Entry" whom we have quoted so often in this chapter writes : "As matters stand at present the Thiyya Hindu of Hindu Travancore has not as much right

*Page 146, *vide* Right of Temple Entry.

of free citizenship as the lowest Hindu in the Muhammadan state of Hyderabad or the lowest Hindu of Christian British India. To be a Hindu in the Hindu state of Travancore is not a privilege for the non-caste Hindus ; it is not a mere handicap ; it is a curse ; it is an insult. Therefore there can be no other conclusion but that the caste-Hindu in Travancore is not exercising his right as a Hindu for the cause or on behalf of Hinduism, his state religion, but purely for the private purpose of his own caste-Hindu community."*

When the present Maharaja ascended the masnad a few years ago the situation was approaching a crisis. A large section of the Hindus was preparing to abandon Hinduism and embrace Christianity rather than continue to live as the helots of Hindu society. The Maharaja took his courage in both hands and prevented the mass conversion by the famous Temple Entry Proclamation. The event should open the eyes of all who so vehemently allege that immemorial usages cannot be altered except in small imperceptible doses. The hideous structure of Hindu society and religion could be altered in the twinkling of an eye, if the Hindu rulers or the British Government were earnest in their desire to save their Hindu subjects, as well as their own faces. Though most of the evil customs have grown too rotten to stand scrutiny by honest men they are allowed to stand, because there is no ruler or government to give them a kick into the rubbish heap.

Cochin is another orthodox Hindu state, and very progressive too, having the largest percentage

*Page 176, Right of Temple Entry.

of literacy in all India. In this state there are more than four lakhs, or two-thirds of the Hindu population who are even now treated as untouchables and to whom British imperialism or any other rule would any day be more welcome than Hindu Raj. Already two and a half lakhs or 27 per cent of the total population (1921) have become Christians. Next to Travancore, Cochin is the most Christian state in India.

Kashmir is probably the most ancient of the Hindu states now existing. But it is Hindu only in name. Out of a total population of about $33\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs (1921) $25\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs are Muhammadans and the Hindus number only $6\frac{3}{4}$ lakhs. The intolerableness of Hinduism is further evidenced by the increasing number of Hindus who are becoming Arya Samajists, Sikhs and Buddhists. Hindu Raj has never been for the good of the Hindus. It has always existed for the profit of a small minority of high castes and the exploitation and suppression of the largest number. The scheme of Hindu life, social, religious and political, fundamentally remains what it was in the days of Manu when "the people were nothing, the prince was little and the priest was everything." The risk of a revival of Hindu Raj under Swaraj is the greatest peril that threatens Hindu India.

Chapter XVII

HINDU CULTURE IS ANTI-NATIONAL

The term "Hindu Culture" has a very wide significance and unless we state clearly what we mean by it in this connection, it will be difficult to make anything of the nature of general remarks in this short chapter. Our object from the beginning of this volume has been to trace the evolution in its broad national outlook of Hindu life from its earliest sources. In the previous chapters we have passed quickly through many centuries, catching and arranging in a comprehensive form the dominant features and forces which have brought the nation to its present condition. Our attempt in the present chapter will be confined to an examination of Hindu life as it is now. Secondly, we do not propose to refer to the political and democratic influences which are slowly infusing a new spirit into the people, however dim it may be, and illuminating the hearts of the really great leaders. Their effect so far has been so superficial, that but for the promises of the future which they hold out, they do not weigh very much in a consideration of the inherited tendencies and prevailing ideals of the present generation. Thirdly, we will restrict our consideration to the more or less permanent institutions which are common to the whole community, because our intention is not to describe all the internal currents and counter-currents, the jerks and windings of the cultural stream, but merely to survey the general direction of its course, to watch where it is, on the whole, leading us. Fourthly, the institutions considered will be such as can be easily studied by

any interested person taking a quiet trip to a few villages in any part of India. Fifthly, we do not believe that there is much good to be derived from an examination of what has been said and written, what is professed. We must rely on what is being done, what is being lived. Sixthly, we must not forget that, though Hinduism continues to be essentially Brahmanical, the Brahmans are no longer its sole custodians or champions. All the chief Hindu communities share responsibility for its preservation. The evil blood courses through the veins of all Hindus. Hindu culture will, therefore, mean the spirit and general tendencies of the socio-religious institutions which make the Hindus a distinct people with an individuality of their own, which are an expression of their common collective life, which they cherish as their most valued possessions, and which form the strongest bond of union or uniformity among them.

The word "Hindu" might lead one to think that the unity is one of creed or faith. Unfortunately, or as some believe fortunately, it is not so. Hinduism is not a religion in the sense in which Buddhism, or Muhammadanism or Christianity are religions. All the hundreds of tribes and castes of India, who are not Muhammadans or Christians are treated as Hindus; the aggregate of their traditions, beliefs and customs and institutions is called Hinduism, though they may be mutually irreconcilable themselves. Frankly speaking, it is not possible to say definitely who is a Hindu and what is Hinduism. These questions have been considered again and again by eminent scholars, and so far no satisfactory answer has been given. Hinduism has within itself all types

of religion such as Theism, Atheism, Polytheism, Adwaitism, Dwaitism, Saivism, Vaishnavism and so forth. It contains nature worship, ancestor worship, animal worship, idol worship, demon worship, symbol worship, self worship and the highest god worship. Its conflicting philosophies will confound any oridnary person. From barbarous practices and dark superstitions, up to the most mystic rites and sublime philosophies there is place for all gradations and varieties in Hinduism. Similarly among the Hindu population are found half-barbarian wild tribes, and depressed classes and untouchables, along with cultured gentle natures and highly evolved souls.

"Though the Hindus are thus separated from other religious communities, it should not be imagined that they are united by a bond of a common system of doctrines. There is in fact no system of doctrines, no teacher, or school of teaching, no single god that is accepted by all the Hindus. Again no amount of deviation from the established doctrines, or disregard of any book or even of some customs, would cause a person to fall from Hinduism, that is, become liable to exclusion from the Hindu community."*

There are scholars who find sanctity in this vagueness, in the so-called universal character, in the absence of all restraints of form and scope, in this unique vacuity and brilliant disorganisation. The honest truth, however, seems to be that the various attempts made by successive teachers and kings in the past to restore order and some sort of uniformity have not succeeded to any considerable extent. The work has to be continued if the wild forest, in which

*Page 34, Essay on Hinduism, by S. V. Kelkar.

good and bad things thrive in their natural freedom, is to be converted into an orderly well planned garden. No doubt there is beauty and grandeur in the forest, but it is a beauty and grandeur for which man can no more take credit than for that of the sun and the stars. It is not a question of ultimate values at all; it is one of human needs and practical issues. If we want a garden, we have to do a good deal of clearing and planning and pruning. If the Hindus want to function as an organised nation along with the other nations of the world, as an independent nation in the midst of other independent nations, they will not be able to do it in their present disorganisation and chaos.

Out of the 225 millions of Hindus of India, nearly ninety per cent or 200 million form the vast horde of illiterate peasants who know nothing of the ancient scriptures except a few mutilated Puranic stories passed from mouth to mouth. Mr. Ardershir Sorabjee* has justly remarked: "Their religion is a standing travesty of ancient Hinduism, consisting as it does of rank idolatry mixed with superstition and fetishism of the most degrading type. They believe in the worship of their innumerable Devas or good spirits and the propitiation of an equally large number of demons and evil spirits, both of which they assume have their resting places on earth in their idols of stone and marble, gold and silver." This is true as well of a major portion of the literate classes who accept the prevailing practices without thought or protest. What independent thinkers and scholars have said and written about Hinduism represent their aspirations, and what Hinduism ought to be rather than

*Page 136, The Message of Krishna.

what it is. Many of them avoid all consideration of the truly representative institutions of the Hindus which alone can disclose the heart of the community. What then are those institutions of the present day which will enable one to understand the average Hindu mind best? They are at least three in number: (1) The social structure represented by the caste system, (2) The religious system of temples, and (3) the philosophical schools represented by the Mutts of Sannyasins. These three constitute the chief forces which hold the community together into some sort of unity and embody their hereditary culture more than anything else does. A study of these three as they are functioning at the present day, and probably nothing else, will disclose the true character of the cultural forces which govern the nation's mind.

CASTE.

The Hindus of India are divided into about three thousand castes and a much larger number of sub-castes, every one of which forms an exclusive group consisting of persons born of members of the group. Every child born of a Hindu becomes, by virtue of such birth and no other consideration whatsoever, a member of the caste and sub-caste of its parents. The members of one group are not allowed to intermarry or inter-dine with those of another group. Each group has a caste-name and a fixed place in the hierarchy of castes graded one above the other. One born low cannot by any means rise to a higher caste status.

The castes are quite different from the four Varnas contemplated by the ancient writers. They have nothing in common except that the castes have

been recently brought under the old main heads or divisions into Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. Mr. S. V. Kelkar who has made a scientific study of the entire system of castes, says: "The doctrine of four Varnas, if properly understood, is a very healthy doctrine for any people. This doctrine does not support the caste system, but is antagonistic to it."* But it is merely a doctrine, and history does not show that it was ever worked in practice. "The fact is that the fourfold castes were merely a theoretical division of society to which the tribes and family groups were affiliated."†

Others have tried to compare the Eastern castes with the Western classes. They are as different as day and night. Classes with the spirit of prestige and exclusiveness exist in one form or other in all societies, and the Hindus are no exception. There are classes among them in addition to castes; if the whole caste system goes, the class distinctions will still remain in their present form or in a modified form.

The divisions of the caste system are not based on any known principle. They are not racial in character; they do not represent separate professions; they do not denote cultural differences. No doubt the members of some groups have their hereditary professions. But the following of that profession will not make one a member of that group, nor will its abandonment cause his exclusion from the caste. To-day castes are no more professional or cultural divisions than the administrative divisions such as villages, Taluks and districts of India. We have

*Page 25, The History of Castes.
†Page 25, Hinduism and the Modern World, by K. M. Panikkar.

already seen how the caste movement was started when the priests set themselves up as Brahmans and refused to mingle with the other people. It became a question of prestige for the rest to do likewise. Some of the Kshatriyas followed the example. But until the rulers of India gave a general recognition to the theories of the Brahmans, the latter had little effect on the popular customs. The Brahmans might have clung to their monopolies and haughty exclusiveness because they advanced their interests; the rest of the Indian population never willingly accepted the Brahmanical dictates so long as they had the power to resist. When the Muhammadans and the English became the masters of India, the caste rules came to be adopted as the law of the Hindu people who had no alternative but to submit to them.

Once the principle of caste was publicly recognised and enforced by the state, each group wanted to establish its status and prestige by refusing to mingle with others around them. It was a regular competition for social distinction of some sort or other. When the census operations were first introduced a similar spirit manifested itself. It is said that in Travancore between the census of 1911 and 1921, 95 new caste groups came into prominence. Even the despised Pariahs considered it a privilege to treat some other community as lower in status than themselves, and the method of asserting a superior position was the refusal to intermarry or inter-dine. There was no principle or reason underlying the formation of most of the present-day castes. Sometimes rivalry between leaders was the cause, at other times it was some silly custom, or violation of a custom, or some myth which created a split.

"One sub-division of a caste feels strong repulsion to another sub-division, because among the latter the use of tobacco is customary ; two sections of one caste do not intermarry and feel strong repulsion for each other because they use different kinds of shoes ; two castes refuse to marry with each other to-day because their forefathers at one time quarrelled over the boundaries of the village or over certain other questions, important or foolish. The primitive nations have always a very strong dislike for one another. Savage nations are sub-divided into an infinity of tribes which, bearing a cruel hatred toward each other, form no intermarriage even when their language springs from the same root, and only a small arm of a river or a group of hills separates their habitations."* The writer has known instances of members of the same caste refusing to intermarry because they lived in two villages separated by three or four miles only in the same district of an Indian state. These rivalries are but remnants of the old tribal mentality. When a state gives its legal recognition to the foolishness of ignorant men, petty aversions are magnified and perpetuated as castes. To such ridiculous extent and nicety has the caste feeling been developed in some places that there are persons to whom the touch of their wives and children is pollution and who will be outcaste if they eat food touched by the latter.

Some scholars have tried to read a racial significance into the caste divisions. Even the original division into four Varnas did not denote racial distinction, as the Brahmans, the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas were all Aryans. Later on different foreign

*Page 28, History of Caste, by Kelkar.

tribes have been indiscriminately admitted into the Hindu circle without any thought of racial characteristics. "In the whole book (Manu Shastra) there is not a single expression which would indicate that our writer has any conception of what we may call race, and the readers of our text should take every care not to put into the word Arya, a meaning which modern philology has attached to the English word "Aryan." . . . "Whether a tribe or family was racially Aryan or Dravidian was a question which never troubled the people of India until foreign scholars came in and began to draw the line."* The new race theory and the racial persecutions in America, Germany and Africa have given a handle to Hindu orthodoxy to justify their caste dissensions.

Mr. Kelkar further proves that the castes are not supported by Hindu theology or even the Hindu Shastras. "The theology which the Hindus, especially the Brahmans, created belonged to various schools. Some schools of theology were silent about castes, and the theories of the most orthodox school (Vedantic) discountenance the caste system in the most uncompromising manner."

"Not only have the theology and the Varna doctrines been opposed to the Hindu caste system, but so has been their Dharma philosophy. What Dharma writers insist on is that everybody should perform the duties of his position (Varna). This Dharma doctrine of the Hindus does not endorse the caste system."†

None of the later saints and teachers have supported the caste divisions. Some perhaps said

*Page 82, History of Caste, by Kelkar.
†Page 25, History of Caste, by Kelkar.

nothing about them, but most of them have openly condemned the meaningless and ruinous restrictions. The first Sree Sankaracharya, the greatest of all orthodox Acharyas, preached uncompromising Advaitism, the spiritual unity of all creation, and admitted into his order of monks persons of all castes. Mahipati's history of the saints contains the lives of about 100 saints. They include about 10 women and an equal number of Muhammadans, about 40 non-Brahmans and an equal number of Brahmans. Among the non-Brahman saints there are all castes —butchers, spinners, weavers, goldsmiths, barbers, mahars, kings, farmers, bankers, and soldiers. All of them spoke against the unnatural social barriers which disfigured Hindu society and violated the rudimentary teachings of true religion. We have already noted that the sixty-three Saivite saints belonged to all classes from the highest to the lowest. True Saivism recognises no caste. It will be no exaggeration to say that no great religious teacher of India from the most ancient days down to the present has failed to express his abhorrence of the wicked and foolish caste distinctions.

The injunctions of the Brahmanical Shastras are all without exception openly violated in these days, so much so, that the most scrupulous Sankarcharyas of the present day would have to be excommunicated and driven out of the Mutts if those rules were to be strictly enforced. The Shastras have long ago ceased to be an authority for the customs now prevailing among the Hindus. The Brahmans and the other higher castes are doing acts every day which should be sufficient to justify their expulsion from caste if the Shastras were strictly applied. But

no one thinks of these daily violations. If it is proposed to admit the Harijan into the temple or to celebrate a widow-marriage or prevent a child-marriage, then the old books are ransacked and authorities quoted against the innovations. Manu (III, 151-166) condemns as unfit for Brahmans, professions such as those of teachers for money, sellers of oils, physicians, temple-priests, shopkeepers, messengers, architects, planters of trees, usurers, cattlemen, actors, singers, astrologers, farmers and many others. He absolutely forbids a Brahman to trade in the following articles (Manu X, 86-94): Condiments, cooked food, stones, cattle, dyed cloth, cloth of hemp, flax or wool, meat, poison, milk, ghee, oil, perfumes, honey, indigo, lac, sugar, birds, wines, wild animals, weapons, water, etc.; all of these professions and trades are now followed by Brahmans, and some of them they even monopolise such as that of the temple-priest. We cannot say that at any time in history these prohibitions were observed by the Brahmans as a community. They have never troubled themselves about the Shastras when their violation was to their advantage or convenience.

Speaking about the Brahmans of Maharashtra Mr. Kelkar says: "Thus a man who belongs to the caste which represents priesthood may commit any infraction of the rules of convention or of scripture, or may do actions which even many non-priestly castes prohibit. He may engage in any trade he pleases; he may go and eat where he wants, drink anything he desires, may go to a foreign country and act according to the manners of the foreign country, may refuse to make atonement for what a traditionalist Hindu regards as sin, and may still retain his

position in the community, that is, may claim the membership of the sacred priestly caste, and his claims would go unchallenged. Even after doing all this, if he cares to take up the occupation of a priest nobody will be able to prevent him from doing so."* Other castes are doing the same thing more or less in all towns, though not so freely in the villages. The ancient authorities are now used mainly to prevent the lower castes from rising, to justify the monopolies and vested interests of the higher castes, and to thwart all attempts to consolidate or reform Hindu society.

The cruel oppressiveness of caste can be realised only by those whose hearts have not been paralysed by long submission to the daily injustices and insults which it imposes on every one but the Brahman. All the evil effects of British imperialism, of which nationalists are never tired of speaking, such as "inferiority complex," "stunting of the race," "destruction of manhood," "slave mentality," and others, have been produced, and are being produced with tenfold callousness under caste rule. "The present situation is steadily destroying our capacity for initiative and dwarfing us as men of action." "Everywhere the stamp of inferiority was branded on them, in their education, in the legal, medical and educational professions, in their employments, in their social relations, in their manufacturing and mercantile associations." "All initiative, all originality have been rigorously suppressed, while manly independence has been resented and even punished." "It has emasculated the nation. Indians hesitate where they should act; they ask where they

*Page 87, Essay on Hinduism, by Kelkar,

should take; they submit where they should resist; they lack self-confidence and the audacity that commands success. They lack fire and decision." "The tallest among us must bend." All these and similar allegations against British imperialism are certainly more true of the caste regime. If any government in the world deserves to be called "Satanic," it is undoubtedly the caste-rule of the Hindus.

In a Hindu state ruled by a Hindu Maharaja the conditions are much worse than in British India. The Maharaja will generally be more accessible to a Brahman clerk or a Brahman peon than to a non-Brahman minister. The Brahman priest will often wield greater influence than the Dewan. A Brahman mendicant may be allowed to dine with the Maharaja, but never his own consort who is a non-Kshatriya lady. There are Maharajas to whom the touch of their wives and children is pollution and who will not take food in their company. A non-Brahman can never feel honestly that equality with fellow citizens which he enjoys under a foreign ruler. Before an English governor or viceroy, the Brahman minister and the Pariah secretary feel a freedom and equality which is unknown in Hindu society. With education and money all can rise to the highest places without enduring the insulting distinctions which are the cursed lot of the Hindus under Hindu rule.

The treatment accorded to the Harijan classes is simply inhuman. "You may breed cows and dogs in your house," wrote Mr. M. C. Raja. "You may drink the urine of cows and swallow cow-dung to expiate your sins, but you shall not

approach an Adi Dravida. The Adi Dravidas are still denied the use of public wells and tanks and at the same time, stigmatised as unclean. They are still kept out of schools and colleges maintained by public funds and at the same time despised as ignorant and illiterate. They are still shut out from temples, and yet branded as ungodly and unfit to associate with. For access to public roads and even for spaces to bury the dead they have to depend much on the capricious benevolence of their caste-Hindu neighbours."*

"No greater wrong can be done to a community endowed with human feelings and human capacities," cries out Mr. M. C. Raja, "than to place it in such circumstances as to force it or lead it to believe that its members are eternally and for all time to come doomed to a life of ignorance, servitude and misery, and that any sort of ambition in them for betterment or improvement is sin. These voiceless millions are ground every day unto the dust and are treated with contempt, a barbarity that is not accorded even to the vilest of animals. Hungry, naked, disspirited, living in wretched hovels, cringing in their attitude through long oppression, driven often by hunger to eat anything they get, abandoned religiously, morally, mentally and physically, they remain utterly miserable and helpless."† And after all their great sin is that they are Hindus, not of their own accord, but because others have treated them so. But for the Christian missionaries, these rejected ones of Hindu society would have been for ever condemned to the life of

*Page 150, Right of Temple Entry.
†Page 153, Right of Temple Entry.

wretchedness and slavery which are their assigned lot according to the Shastras. Hindu charity has always been for the highest ; it does not stoop to help the children of misery. Hindu law knows only how to suppress the weak ; it has no provision for raising the low. It is ever intent on dividing and splitting up ; it has no philosophy for uniting. From the untouchable class right up to the Kshatriya Raja, the castes represent but varying degrees of serfdom to Brahmanism to which Hindu kings, merchant princes and the commoner, no less than the Harijan must bend their necks. The entire arrangement is antagonistic to all sense of justice, self-respect and humanity.

The castes serve no useful purpose in modern society. They help only to perpetuate the grip of the Brahman priest and preserve his monopolies. Social and religious institutions profit him only in this world, and all others must wait for their reward in the next. The many thousands of temples, large and small scattered throughout the country exist, in practice, for the gain of the priests. The charitable feeding houses endowed chiefly by non-Brahmans and meant for poor pilgrims and travellers benefit the well-to-do Brahmans more than the weary traveller who must wait for the crumbs and leavings after the Brahmans have enjoyed the good things within closed doors. The domestic priests ply their trade in one form or other all over the country among all classes of Hindus and divert a good portion of the earnings of the poor to their pockets. No one else gains anything by virtue of mere caste.

The baneful influence of the system pervades the whole of society, has sunk deep into all layers of the

community and become a part of the mental constitution of the Hindu. Even in the remote village, far from railway stations and post offices, there will be a small temple with a Brahman priest and a poor school with a Brahman teacher ; and the life of the village community is moulded, cabined and confined in a hundred different ways by a handful of these men. The innocent boys and girls who are sent to the school are injected with the venom of caste feelings in their tender years. In the classroom they are seated according to their castes ; they are taught to respect the differences as their first duty in life. The low caste pupils are treated with contempt and cruelty and are made to do all the menial work for the teacher and the school. The high caste pupil is given authority over his classmates and trained to manage them with a sense of haughty superiority, and with power to abuse and punish them in the absence of the teacher. The feeling of caste conceit on one side, and of degradation on the other, enters into the flesh and blood of the young ones and they never recover from it in after life. The houses are grouped on a caste basis, each caste occupying a definite portion of the village. The uneducated and rude temple priest poses as the highest authority on social law and religious practices. If any one shows signs of insubordination, he is able to set the village in a commotion and crush the spirit of reform and freedom. The humble Harijans without whose ungrudging service the villagers are not able to cultivate their lands, tend their cattle, build their houses or dig their tanks and wells, must not live within the village proper. They are assigned a dirty corner outside. The tanks and wells they

helped to dig are forbidden to them; they cannot take water from them even for drinking purposes. The temple festivals, marriages, and similar functions, public and private afford the priest abundant opportunities to lord over the congregation with an iron hand, exacting servile obeisance besides money and other useful things. They are made to humble themselves to the dust, to wash the feet of the priest, and with water so used to anoint their own heads. Some of these degrading formalities may not be observed in the towns. Otherwise the influence of the priest is as strong and as debasing there as in the villages.

The modern Hindu may be a philosopher, a judge of the high court, a minister of the government, an ardent nationalist, but he is first a man of his caste, a Brahman or a Sudra or some other caste, and then only, subject to his caste obligations, he can be all the rest. He cannot feel as a Hindu or as an Indian without first being a caste-man. He may denounce these superstitions and live in a foreign country where they are unknown, and imbibe the spirit of freedom and democracy, but when he returns home he sinks to the level which he occupied before he left it, if not immediately, after a few years of vain defiance. The headstrong reformer and the bold Sannyasin may set at naught the restrictions of caste, abandon his attachment to all orthodox things, and yet after a few years of desperate struggle he will seek rest in quiet submission to the inevitable vices of society. The village Panchayat or Co-operative Society sponsored by the Government for the good of the whole village, soon becomes a centre for caste feuds, and degenerates into a sham, or else it must

strictly preserve the injustices and indignities of caste, even the tallest bending to them with devotion. Large business concerns started by the educated and wealthy men of the towns, mills and factories, banks and presses, as well as schools and libraries inaugurated with enthusiasm and built up with the funds contributed by all classes, fall before the silent disruptive forces of caste, and wherever one goes, one can see monuments of the ravages wrought by disunion and distrust. It may be a local political association, or a Committee of the National Congress, its days of united activity close before anything substantial is achieved, leaving behind only sad traces of caste prejudice and ill will among those who once worked shoulder to shoulder. Even the First House of Parliament is not free from this universal sore.

There is no aspect of the nation's life which has not been vitiated, no institution which has not been tarnished, no saint or martyr who has not been victimised by caste. And yet the Hindus cling to it with demoniac tenacity. It will be a profitless delusion to hope that they will be able to think long in terms of the nation or human freedom, so long as they are bred and brought up in the atmosphere of caste. Caste is essentially anti-national and undemocratic. Democracy and caste cannot co-exist. Though new ideas have been assimilated and new aspirations evoked by the contact with Western civilisation, they remain but on the surface. The stream of Hindu life flows remorselessly along its ancient course, mixed with the dirt and rubbish of ages, carrying on its foamy breast the new decorations of freedom, equality and nationality. You may offer a thousand flowers of sacrifice and devotion

to mother Ganges, she will carry them all mercilessly to their doom in the vast ocean. Like those flowers are our patriotic deeds for the freedom of India, wasted and destroyed when thrown on the surface of the ancient stream in blind veneration for the past. We have to learn to build our national edifice on firmer ground than that provided by the debris of caste and priestcraft. Until then Indian independence cannot be safe on the sands of disunion and chaos.

The caste culture is so repugnant to the elementary teachings of all the great religions of the world that we cannot find fault with the Muhammadans or the Christians if they feel an instinctive revulsion towards the caste-infected Hindu. The caste divisions not only make the Hindu society a house divided against itself, but also a community which is up in arms against all other communities, and against whom all other communities are up in arms. When a man goes about among his brothermen with an air of superiority and exclusiveness, when he proudly refuses to take a cup of tea or a slice of bread in the company of men as respectable as himself, when he parades by his name and signs his pretensions to a unique origin, he is virtually insulting every self-respecting man in the world. A Hindu who carries his caste with him is thus a standing insult to humanity. Similarly a nation which has willingly subjected itself to so obnoxious a culture, frightful in its vicious power to contaminate all the institutions of democracy and religion, is rightly avoided by those nations who wish to preserve their freedom and self-respect. If the Hindus segregate themselves, every caste away from every other caste,

and the whole of society from every other society, they cannot consistently complain if Africa or America or other democratic countries segregate the Hindus or ban them.

Who can say that the Muhammadans are wrong when they claim that they are a distinct nation from the Hindus? Muhammadanism stands for the highest freedom and union of its followers. Hinduism is contagious with the germs of serfdom and disunion. So long as the Hindus are subject to the rule of caste and most of them wear the badges and names of hereditary inferiority, they cannot claim an equal place along with the free peoples of the world. They have contaminated the sacred springs of their own national life and religious aspirations, frustrated the attempts of their great teachers and saints, degraded beyond redemption many millions of their own brother religionists with the brand of untouchability; who can say that their association will not degrade the Muhammadan and Christian by familiarity with caste and idolatry? A natural and quite reasonable abhorrence of wicked institutions like these, and fear of their baneful influence make the Hindus a people to be avoided in the eyes of other communities, for which they cannot be justly blamed.

Let it not be imagined that in these days of British justice and law courts, the caste tribunals have ceased to function. Except in the case of those who live in the cities and are rich and powerful enough to disregard the opinion of their caste, the Hindus as a whole are everywhere subject to the jurisdiction of the capricious and vague caste authorities. "Most people in India are under a double government. There is the state controlling

the civil activities of the people, and there is the caste-headmen or panchayat or Swami guiding the religious and social life even, in some cases, wielding the same powers as the Government Government by caste is not often felt by us by reason of our acquaintance with it in daily life ; but all the same there are some castes, sub-castes is perhaps a better term, in which the control of the state is far less potent. For such offences as even assault, theft and adultery, the caste panchayat punishes the criminal, who very often finds it more difficult to escape the punishment of the caste government than that of the state."*

In addition, there are Hindu Rajas who exercise their sovereign powers to preserve intact all the social and religious abominations with an enthusiasm bordering on fanaticism. It was only about four years ago that the two neighbour Hindu states of Travancore and Cochin drifted almost into a state of open hostilities because the Travancore ruler opened his temples to all Hindus, an act which raised him in the eyes of most Indians and even others to the eminence almost of an Asoka, and the Cochin ruler took up cudgels against all those who supported the innovation. But for the presence of the British power, the situation would have ripened into another Mahabharata War. The mailed fist of the caste demon is as threatening as ever after nearly two centuries of Christian rule.

TEMPLES.

In none of these discussions are we concerned with the faults of individuals, or with the mismanagement

*Page 133, Census of India (1911), by M. S. Kamath.

of those entrusted with work, or with the weaknesses and errors common to all human institutions. Such shortcomings are the common lot of all humanity. We are speaking here of those characteristics and influences of public institutions which are deliberately fostered by men of light and responsibility as the very essence of the nation's culture and greatness. We have already said enough about the origin and growth of the Hindu temples. To show what function they serve in modern Hindu society we shall describe one instance.

The Tirupati temple in the North Arcot District of South India is one of the most famous shrines of pilgrimage, and worshippers throng there from distant parts of the country. It is in receipt of an annual income of two to three lakhs of rupees, mainly derived from the offerings of the worshippers. It is situated on the top of a high hill, and the gradual ascent to the summit covers a distance of seven miles of steps built one above the other with convenient halts and windings at intervals. The ascent has to be done on foot or in palanquins carried on the shoulders of men.

As soon as a pilgrim begins the climb, with his mind full of pious thoughts and his lips incessantly uttering the holy names of God, and praying for the successful termination of the meritorious trip up and down, the very first shock that he receives is the sight on either side of the road of wretched men, women and children, some blind, others lame or crippled, or deformed, yet others pretending to be fakirs and Sadhus, each one with a begging bowl or a piece of cloth spread on the ground for passers-by to throw their coins. Right and left they sit all

along the seven miles of steps and harass the pilgrims with heart-rending appeals for alms. Some of them follow the visitors, disregarding protests and refusals, hanging at their heels and imploring in abject terms for the smallest coin, nay not even a coin but a shell representing a fraction of the smallest coin, the pie! Some give, some turn a deaf ear to all the implorings and harden their hearts against the sight of poverty and dirt, hypocrisy and meanness, disease and destitution, superstition and mockery which stare them in the face on this sacred path. All the miserable specimens of Hindu society who really deserve the pity and organised help, in one form or other, of religion and the state are there arrayed in their utmost wretchedness; and he should be a rare being indeed whose heart is not sickened by the vision of suffering or hardened by the continued suppression of all sympathetic feelings, by the time he reaches the summit. In fact, most people keep the money they have to be given to the idol in the temple and pass the hundreds of beseeching hands on the way with no compunction whatsoever. In any other civilised country the first obligation of religion would be to stretch a helping hand to these brethren and raise them from their degradation. But in India, neither this temple with its huge income nor any other temple, has a word of consolation to give to these—the rejected of men. The religion of temples recognises no meritorious work other than worship of the idol. It has no provision to raise the down-trodden, educate the ignorant, succour the destitute, comfort the sinner or unite the disunited. It does not believe in giving or doing good, but exists to receive and exact good things from its devotees.

The pilgrim reaches the top with the small bundle of coins and other offerings meant for the idol, and which he devoutly refused to untie to relieve the suffering he saw on the way, and moves through the crowded temple street filled with men and women, bargaining with fruit-vendors, flower girls, vegetable merchants and other traders who line the road on either side, suggesting the vicinity of a market rather than of a place of worship, until he reaches the temple and perhaps throws himself prostrate before the shrine. He has fulfilled the ambition of a life-time; he has carried out the pious wish of a deceased grand-father to deliver his small bundle of offerings to the god of Tirupati. His devotional submissiveness, his innocent faith, his blissful surrender to the deity of his heart, the holy consolation he receives on thinking of the most meritorious act he has just done—all these express the profound religious fervour common to all Hindus. Well directed under the guidance of religious organisations meant for their uplift, these deep feelings would be the means of the nation's unity, strength, self-sacrificing power, success and glory. But alas! the religion of idolatry stands for heartless exploitation.

The pilgrim must pay if he wants to see the idol; the incense he offers will not be burnt unless he deposits a fee for it; for every trifling act of worship he has to pay down hard cash. The shrine looks like a Jew's money-shop. Officers sit surrounded by treasure chests, account books and receipt bundles; the holy precincts resound with the clink of coins thrown into the chest or counted down before the manager; the Brahman priests are busy with their idolatrous ceremonies of washing

and clothing and decorating the image and feeding it with varied dishes, inside the dark interior suggestive of witchcraft rather than of divine worship; occasional ringing of bells and the beating of drums and blowing of horns serve to drown the buzz and noise of the busy trade; the iron bars which surround the immediate presence of the deity, with uniformed sentries watching at the entrance to prevent any one entering without ticket, reminds us of a cinema house. Day in and day out the same irreligious trade of collecting money and other offerings from the devotees goes on. There is not a redeeming feature ; nothing to console the sad heart, nothing to enlighten the superstitious, nothing to guide the ignorant, nothing to inspire the thoughtful, nothing to strengthen the faithful, nothing to purify the wicked, nothing to elevate the fallen. God sits enthroned on his inaccessible throne bedecked with gold and jewels, surrounded by flatterers and hypocrites, exacting the homages and riches of miserable humanity with the stony-hearted indifference of a greedy tyrant. Such is the organised religion of the nation even to-day—a system of vile exploitation. No doubt faith gets its reward ; the true devotee may receive his consolation, but not because of the temples or what is done there, but in spite of their disgusting deceptions.

The small village temples, which number hundreds of thousands in this vast country and are the nurseries of the nation's culture and ideals, are appropriate feeders to the larger ones. If you go to any ordinary village and ask the first person you meet to show you the dirtiest locality there, if he is honest and sharp-witted, he will take you to the

temples, for in most cases these edifices in their dilapidated appearance, the condition of the precincts and the state of the interior are monuments of neglect, decay and dirty habits. The compound wall has crumbled down in many places and straying cattle can go in and go out ; street urchins use the convenient enclosure for their hide-and-seek game or mud-throwing exploits. The plastered walls, if there be any remaining, are filled with filthy figures and writings inscribed by shameless youngsters and some times by grown-up vagabonds to exhibit their moral aberration. The small yard will for months remain unswept, overgrown with shrubs and sprinkled with cowdung and other rubbish. Nobody cares to visit the temple except on festive days. Of course the Brahman priest keeps his attendance every day, which is evidenced by the mark he puts on the forehead of the idol. Even the holy of holies will be filled with dust and dirt and stinking with the foul odour of bats and rats and cockroaches. Ugly and terrific looking images remind us of the bloody sacrifices which they used to enjoy in olden days, but of which they are deprived now. Even when the daily worship is being conducted by the priest, men and women, if there are any present, sit and talk as if in their shops without the least show of reverence, and children make themselves merry by climbing on the pillars and ringing the bells. There is not a moment of calm or thoughtfulness when the people meet for worship. They break their coconuts, give the priest his share, make a round of the shrine, bow to the darkness where the idol is, and retrace their steps to their respective homes with as little pretensions to devotion or respect for god as if they had

gone to borrow a pinch of snuff or buy a cigarrette.

More than a century ago, the Abbe Dubois wrote thus :—" There is a well known Hindu proverb which says, a temple mouse fears not the gods! This exactly applies to the Brahmans who enter their temples without showing the slightest sign of serious thought or respect for the divinities who are enshrined therein. Indeed they often choose these particular places to quarrel and fight in. Even while performing their numerous religious fooleries, their behaviour shows no indication of fervour or real devotion."* These remarks are letter by letter true of the temples of the present day also, perhaps with the additional force that the irreverence is manifest among the worshippers also. The learned Frenchman also wrote : " To have any connection with a courtesan or with an unmarried person is not considered a form of wickedness in the eyes of the Brahmans. These men, who look upon the violation of any trivial custom as a heinous sin, see no harm in the most outrageous and licentious excesses. It was practically for their use that the dancers and prostitutes who are attached to the service of the temples were originally entertained, and they may often be heard to intone the following scandalous line : *Vesya darsanam punyam, papa nasanam!* which means, Looking upon a prostitute is a virtue which takes away sin."† Dancing girls have been dismissed from some of the temples in recent years, otherwise the priestly mentality is not much different to-day from what it was when the above lines were written.

That it maintains a priest is the highest claim

*Page 299, Abbe Dubois.
†Page 213, Abbe Dubois,

that can be made for a village temple. Otherwise, it is an unmitigated nuisance, an eye-sore to all right thinking men, an unadulterated mockery, a disfigurement of true religion, and the original sin of Hindusim which makes every child born in the community a sinner. These debasing structures disgrace the country from one end to the other. Just a few temples may set a better example, arrange a few lectures or readings or feed a few travellers. Those are exceptions. On the other hand there are others where bloody sacrifices are regularly performed, intoxicating drinks are offered to the deity and drunk by the priests and the worshippers. In connection with the annual festival of some of these, liquor pots are taken in procession with bands and music. On one occasion about six years ago such a procession occasioned a conflict between the Hindus and the Muhammadans in Malabar, when the latter objected to liquor pots being deified and carried in front of their mosques. This dispute soon spread into the nearest town and for two years caused serious rioting resulting in many deaths. But we need not treat these as a national institution, though many millions of Hindus are served only by such houses of heinous priestcraft.

We are not concerned with the merits or demerits of idolatry. If each worshipper were allowed to keep his idol and worship it himself, he would soon discover what nonsense it all is. But apart from that, what purpose does the organised religion of public temples serve in the national life, except to perpetuate the degradation of the masses, to facilitate their exploitation by priests, to accentuate caste differences, waste the wealth and devotion of the

people for unmeaning ceremonies, defeat all the good objects of religion, increase superstition and immorality, create party dissension in every village, and worst of all by their provocative devilishness to estrange the feelings of the followers of other religions. And yet the Hindu nation would fight and die for their temples!

MUTTS OF SANNYASINS (MONASTERIES).

We come now to the third representative institution of Hindu civilisation, the latest and the noblest development of Hindu spirituality, the place where all the best that India has inherited from her saints and divine persons is said to be preserved in their pristine purity, the one glorious flight of Hindu inspiration, which the orthodox still maintain no other civilisation in the world has ever attained. We mean the institution of Sannyasins or Monks—persons who have renounced all material cares and dedicated themselves to God-realisation. As has been already stated, we are not concerned with the lives of the Rishis or saints who have in all centuries lighted up the primordial darkness of our life, and some of whom may be in our midst even now. All reverence to them! Our study is confined to institutions and not individuals, for they are the more or less permanent repositories of our culture and they alone really have a hand in shaping the nation's destiny in normal times. Great men come, give their message, do their work and depart to other worlds in a few years. The institutions remain and exert their influence for many decades and even centuries over successive generations, either for good or evil. National life is reflected in these, and not in

the heavenly stars which shed their light over all humanity.

What does Sannyas stand for in the ordinarily accepted usage of the word ? We need not think of the few reformed orders like the Sree Ramakrishna Mission, The Arya Samaj Sadhus or the Sree Naryana Dharma Sangham, which are modern missionary societies rather than orthodox monasteries. Moreover, we have dealt with them in another chapter. Here we shall confine our statements to the Sannyasins of the orthodox type who form the vast majority of Hindu monks and whose influence on popular life is second only to that of the temples. The minimum qualifications expected of a Sannyasin are ordinarily (1) Renunciation of all domestic ties, (2) Renunciation of sexual desires, (3) Renunciation of private property, (4) Renunciation of caste, idolatry and other rituals prescribed for householders, and (5) Dedication of life to self-culture and spiritual illumination. The monasteries fall into three important groups: (*a*) The first group consists of the latest Ashrams established by sages of great repute whose spiritual achievements are taken for granted. These are the purest types. (*b*) To the second group belong the Mutts of the ancient Acharyas. (*c*) The third group is composed of Mutts of later origin than the second, but equally and sometimes more wealthy and influential.

A description of a typical Ashram of the first group should be sufficient to understand the nature of the influence exerted by the others. There is still living in India a great sage who is proclaimed by many leading men of the country as one who has attained God-realisation or self-realisation, the

highest state of spiritual illumination possible for man in this world. Born a Brahman, he left his home when very young and settled down as an ascetic in a well-known town by the side of a famous temple. Wearing but a piece of cloth between the legs, contented with what alms good people took to him voluntarily, caring not for health or comfort of body, he spent many years in Tapas, or severe austerity, simplicity, study and meditation and renunciation. One or two non-Brahman Sadhus attached themselves to him and ministered to his wants, so that he could pursue his Tapas without being worried about the sustenance of the body. Years passed; his reputation spread from mouth to mouth; devotees began to pour in and make offerings; a small hermitage was built; the offerings increased, his relatives came from their village and took up their abode with him. New buildings were built; distinguished persons came from far and wide; many became disciples. A regular colony of aspirants grew up. The words of wisdom which the sage spoke were eagerly read in books and periodicals by Indians and even Europeans. There was an ever increasing inflow of visitors, spiritual students and seekers of illumination. Rich men began to give abundantly of their wealth. The number that enjoyed the daily hospitality of the institution rose to many dozens.

The following are some of the noteworthy features of its present condition: (1) The God-realised sage apparently enjoys life like any ordinary rich man; takes food three or four times daily; has grown old; has the little illnesses which human flesh is ordinarily heir to, and wants medicines and ointments.

He keeps to a regular routine; reads and talks. Who can say what is God-realisation! (2) The non-Brahman Sadhus who ministered to him for many years have been got out of the way. (3) The institution has been taken over, after hot disputes, by the Brahman relatives of the sage who have obtained due authority from him and have, men and women, made their abode there. (4) Scores of worldly minded Brahmans have made it their usual residence, enjoying the regularly served meals and wasting the rest of the time in idle talk. (5) While the sage speaks of self-realisation and meditation on the One Supreme, within a few yards of his room is being raised up a temple of idolatry over the grave of one of his relatives and all the tricks of priestcraft are employed there as in any other Hindu temple. (6) The manager of the Ashram, a relative of the sage, keeps a regular office with assistants and clerks. Here are transacted all the business, such as planning new buildings, appealing for funds, conducting litigation, publishing books, celebrating festivals, inventing attractive stories, creating wonderful pictures of the sage in the company of wild animals and birds, sending out advertisements to newspapers, coaching up propagandists, and doing a variety of things to attract men and make them part with their money—a miniature Hollywood studio. (7) The columns of a widely circulated newspaper are reserved, and every issue publishes advertisements of the sage with illustrations and fanciful stories. Sunlight Soap or Spencer's Cigars were not advertised more studiously and cleverly. (8) European and American visitors are encouraged and induced to write books. (9) The sage, unaware and unmoved,

sits out his daily routine, like the deity of a temple and allows his relatives to make a profitable business of the whole concern.

Observing all this one is tempted to cry with Abbe Dubois, "The Hindus will never improve. They have first to be made barbarians, with all their past destroyed and then given a new culture and new institutions. Even then there will be the constant risk of their relapsing into their native superstitions and deceits." Man loses faith in saints and religion and God, nay in one's own self, when the sublimest conceptions of Truth and Divinity are thus used to exploit the credulous, and sanction the prevailing abuses and iniquities which drag the nation to its slow but sure doom.

When these are the conditions prevailing in the highest spheres, we need not look for anything better in the institutions of the second and the third class. The successors of the ancient Acharyas have not cared to preserve the purity of their ideals, or to carry on the good works they initiated. Some of them command immense wealth and influence. They live like princes, move about like princes with elephants, camels and large retinues, and extort rich gifts from their worshippers in the form of padapooja and similar ceremonies. Some of them are fanatical in their adherence to caste distinctions, and are thus traitors to their own original teachers, as well as to the ideals of the order. All practise idolatry and rituals unbecoming a Sannyasin and seem to have no more spiritual detachment and insight than a householder. They make a hobby of mastering some of the ancient books which few care to read these days, and thus preserve the appearance of superiority over

the common folk. They do nothing for the benefit of Hindu society or the nation, but use their influence to rouse and organise the dying orthodox forces against all reform.

The Mutts of the third group emulate those of the Acharyas in their luxury, splendour paraphernalia and gorgeousness of idolatry and rituals. The heads of some of them are leading vicious lives and cinema films have been produced depicting their dissipations. The only redeeming feature is that a good number of them are indifferent to caste distinctions as between one Sannyasin and another, and take delight in giving free meals to many people everyday. In fact free feeding is their characteristic enjoyment displaying their wealth and status. The most illogical thing ever seen is that of a Mutt or monastery, the inmates of which, though they are Sannyasins and disciples of the same teacher and live under the same roof, do not dine together on account of caste feelings. This is one of the most recent achievements of the Hindu Sannyasins in a well-known town in India personally visited by the writer.

In addition to the above well-known types, there are small Ashrams or retreats established by individual spiritual teachers among whom may be found all sorts of men from useless vagabonds to erudite scholars, all of them with few exceptions being exploiters, adventurers and pretenders who make a name and living among the religious minded middle class and the peasants. Not a few have their peculiar methods and secret doctrines to tempt the credulous into discipleship. The number of these isolated, irresponsible spiritual leaders is legion and

their influence on the community is more extensive and detrimental to progress than one may suspect at first sight, while here and there some simple, harmless souls among them set the example of bold renunciation and earnest desire to help. Isolated cases of Sadhus of a revolutionary type, who defy orthodoxy, caste and idolatry and keep the fire of holy discontent and freedom burning among the masses are not wanting. No general remark can be ventured about the thousands of independent Sadhus who have set up Ashrams in the country, except that from their ranks a truly national Hindu missionary society should be able to draw a large number of raw workers of sterling merit and devotion to the cause of Hindu unity and freedom.

Another aspect of the Mutts of Sannyasins deserves a short mention here. A rising creed of scientific mysticism has been developed by some of the Sannyasins with Brahmanical inclinations, a creed possessing a high degree of destructive efficiency almost as terrible as the scientific militarism of Europe. It is employed indirectly to disarm opposition to caste and priestcraft, and directly to take us to a blind alley which leads nowhere, the metaphysical region where all differences vanish, where good and evil, right and wrong, action and inaction, life and death, reality and unreality, man and God are but interchangeable terms. The system has sprung out of a combination of Western scientific attitudes with Eastern philosophy, and is used in an eminently Oriental way to uphold any creed or custom or theory by leading all discussions to such a high pitch of spiritual mysticism as to paralyse the capacities of discrimination and judgment. America

is the dumping ground of the new spirituality though it has become widespread enough in India to make even ordinarily thoughtful people submit passively to any superstition and trick and custom with the feeling that there might be some mystic explanation or occult meaning in it. It is really unfortunate that even idolatry is finding its way into other lands through this cult.

Such then are the three great cultural institutions of the Hindus—the caste, the temple and the Mutt, and together they are able to hold in chains all the two hundred and forty million Hindus in one form or other. Reformers and politicians create but tiny ripples in this vast ocean of orthodox humanity. All hope lies in the fact that the Hindu masses still have the thirst to know the truth, the heart to love it when known, and the strength to fight for it till achieved. Organised leadership of the right sort is the only thing that is required. In fact, there is no national institution which is making any sustained effort to overcome the disruptive and anti-national forces that are so strongly entrenched all over the country. The Hindus have been drifting and are hoping to drift into a nation. The nation is not being taught to appreciate and hold up a constructive cultural ideal appropriate to the dignity of a free people.

CHAPTER XVIII

BRAHMANISM RESPONSIBLE FOR HINDU-MUSLIM CONFLICT

The problem of Hindu-Muslim unity is the nightmare of Indian politicians at the present day. Even Mahatma Gandhi has confessed his failure to find a solution to this vital question. The growing antagonism between the two communities is more a result of this failure to evolve a scheme of co-operation than the emergence of any insurmountable evil forces or natural incompatibilities which some politicians think have been always smouldering in the hearts of the two peoples. The politics of nationalism has not achieved any outstanding success as a unifying influence in the modern world. But so long as nationalism represents the natural aspirations of a living people for wider co-operation, more efficient organisation and a richer life, it serves its purpose as a legitimate stage in the process of unification and helps the community to progress towards higher ideals of human brotherhood. In spite of the numerous shortcomings of their political ideology and programme and their tragic failure to achieve substantial contentment and peace, the nations of the West have kept on advancing in all directions. The very destructive conflagrations caused by their follies have served to stimulate their manliness and enabled them to carve success out of disheartening failures. They are certainly on the road to victory. But the people of India are not in their natural element. Modern political conceptions are alien to them and do not fit in with their traditional

notions of society. Indians still live in a mediæval world of castes, religious fanaticism and priestly domination, and are trying to put on the fashionable robe of political nationalism over the incongruities and superstitions which characterise their social existence.

The State can solve any problem in the West. There is no field which is denied to its legitimate operation. It tackles the whole of the nation's life. In fact, it is the only force which can decide vital issues. But in India the State occupies only an inferior position in the estimate of the people. They recognise greater masters. Religious and social customs, laws and institutions have a stronger hold and exercise greater authority over them than political considerations. The State is as yet a very inefficient instrument for solving the problems of unhappy India. Neither the Indian State nor the Indian politician has the will or the power to face the vital issues of national regeneration. Political manœuvres have utterly failed to take the country nearer to the goal of true freedom and unity, although Mahatma Gandhi has succeeded to some extent in redeeming politics from its unnatural alienation from the life of the people and has added to it a few social and religious values which it did not possess before.

The Hindu-Muslim problem is one which can never be solved on a purely political basis by party compromises or by administrative safeguards. We have to approach the problem from other sides, and think in terms of the people's life past, present and future, and of abiding human feelings and aspirations. No doubt you may build a state on what you

consider as existing facts. You may take for granted that the Hindus and the Muslims are two distinct peoples and represent two irreconcilable cultures and they have different social and religious ideals and institutions which are sacrosanct and beyond the pale of man's interference, and on the basis of these and similar presumptions you may build a government. But such a structure founded on dead facts and uninspiring features cannot serve any useful purpose and will not stand the test of time. Life, individual as well as national, is a dynamic process and not a static phenomenon. The motive of all regeneration should be, not the preservation of already acquired characteristics but the realisation of unrealised dreams and ambitions. The success of true nation-building lies in the ability to visualise common ideals and popularise them among the citizens and inspire them with a zeal for making sacrifices for their fulfilment. Similarly, Hindu-Muslim unity cannot be built on past history or present facts merely. A comprehensive and inspiring social goal is the more essential requisite of inter-communal co-operation.

The nations of the West are being judged by the ideals for which they are living and fighting. Russia, Germany, Italy, Britain and America are trying to justify themselves before the bar of world opinion on the principles for which they stand. Men and women face the most terrible sufferings bravely and with resignation for the sake of their national principles. They die in thousands, nay millions, in the name of those sacred aspirations. The only way to unite the different communities of India into a united nation is to hold up before them

a glorious social ideal worthy of their highest dedication and willing sacrifices.

Hindu-Muslim unity can be achieved only if the Hindus and the Muslims evolve a scheme of collective life which will appeal to the intelligent sections of the two communities as a goal infinitely better than that of the past and the present. So far no earnest attempt has been made to evolve such a goal and popularise it. At present there is no inspiring common objective for which the two communities can willingly co-operate and endure sufferings except the hazy outline of political independence. The meaning and content of political independence has to be supplied in the form of social liberty, equality of opportunities, economic justice, freedom of faith and other rights, equities and values of daily life which will make national unity a proud asset of every individual and will create in him the consciousness of a common destiny. The political parties of India have not succeeded in placing before the country any such constructive ideal comprehending all aspects of the nation's life. On the other hand, there are millions of people of all parties and communities throughout the country who are sincerely afraid that independent India might relapse or be betrayed by her own leaders into all the ancient injustices, superstitions and mutual rivalries, which brought about the downfall of the country and its subjection to foreign powers. The imperfect programmes announced by some parties, instead of allaying these misgivings, have tended to strengthen and justify them.

Let us examine at closer quarters what are the points of divergence as well as of contact between

the Hindus and the Muslims and how the differences may be eliminated or reduced to a minimum and the affinities multiplied and strengthened to the utmost.

RACE.—No one can contend that the Hindus and the Muslims of India form two distinct racial groups. The Hindus cannot trace their origin to any single racial source nor can the Muslims claim any homogeneous racial ancestry. There is no racial difference between them.

LANGUAGE.—Although in the last few years the leaders of the two communities have started a dispute about the claim of Hindi to be the common language of the country and are trying to pitch the two communities against each other in that dispute, the Hindu and the Muslim masses talk and study the language of their respective provinces without any ill feeling. Language does not create any barrier between them.

ECONOMIC STRUCTURE.—Economically the two communities form one group with the same economic outlook subject to the variations that are natural to a vast country like India.

HISTORY.—If some politicians have succeeded in propagating a belief that historically the Hindus and the Muslims have always existed as two irreconcilable groups, it is not the truth. No doubt they have fought with each other in many a battle-field. But it is also true that Hindus have fought along with Muslims against Hindus, and Muslims have fought along with Hindus against Muslims. Hindu warriors and princes have fought for Muslim rulers, and Muslim soldiers and chiefs have fought for Hindu Rajas. Muslims and Hindus have stood

shoulder to shoulder and opposed their common foes. Muslim saints and rulers have made glorious attempts to bring about a cultural fusion of the two peoples. Hindu teachers and saints have similarly preached their social and spiritual comradeship. Where politicians did not exploit the differences, the two communities have always shown an earnest desire to live side by side in amity in spite of the provocative social barriers which forcibly kept them apart. History can show not only records of frightful conflicts but also the noble spirit of patriotism and glorious examples of mutual goodwill. It is as full of successes and hopes as that of any other country in the world.

POLITICAL IDEOLOGY.—For many centuries now India has been looked upon as one country or one empire by both the Hindus and the Muslims, and they have recognised the right of the successful suzerain state to control the whole of the country. There have been religious fanaticism and consequent persecutions in India as in other countries, but those have not prevented the growth of political commonsense. Both the Hindu and the Muslim peoples have learnt to look upon the state and the sovereign as being above religious differences and as representing the unity and prosperity of all the subjects irrespective of caste and creed. They have certainly outgrown the mediæval conception of fanatical theocracies, though some of their leáders have recently begun frantic attempts to revive it.

RELIGIOUS IDEALS AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES.—The two spheres in which the Hindus and the Muslims are accustomed to array themselves as avowed

enemies are the religious and the social. So far as their religious ideals are concerned, although the philosophers and thinkers of the two religions agree in essentials, as do those of other great religions, there is a fundamental difference in the outlook of the two peoples. The Hindus represent a spirit of the wildest tolerance and freedom amounting almost to chaos and absence of true faith in anything definite. The Muslims stand for a fanatical devotion to a narrow creed and even uncompromising hatred of other creeds. These are two hereditary mentalities which have to be overcome if the communities should be able to appreciate each other. The Hindus have to impart some sort of orderliness and clarity to their fundamental religious beliefs, and redeem them from the wilderness of vices and superstitions which have always shrouded them in darkness. The Muslims have to imbibe a spirit of free thought and sweet reasonableness and toleration in their attitude both towards their own faith and the faiths of others. The saints and teachers of the past used to preach such a rapprochement. But for many decades now these efforts seem to have been completely given up by both the parties. This unfortunate situation can be altered if the leaders of the two peoples, instead of exploiting their differences for political advantages would seek the permanent welfare of their followers.

In the sphere of religious practices the Hindus are the worst sinners. The Muslim practices, except that of cow-slaughter, do not provoke anybody. But on the Hindu side there are many things which no devotee of God can ever tolerate. The entire system of organised Hindu religion represented by the temples and their priests is so revoltingly untrue,

and is such an unmitigated prostitution and exploitation of all true religion that no Muslim can ever think of it except with the fiercest abhorrence. Nor can a true Christian or a true Buddhist view it with anything but contempt and pity for its victims. In the foregoing chapters we have seen that Hindu thinkers and teachers too have condemned the religion of rank idolatry, bloody sacrifices, deliberate deceptions, disgusting superstitions and immorality which the Hindu temples and their priests preserve and propagate throughout the country. If the Hindus cling to these abominations there can be no lasting peace between the Hindus and any other religious community in the world. The Hindus themselves cannot acquire the capacity for true vision and honest thinking and living, so long as they are not redeemed from the falsehood of their priest-imposed religion.

SOCIAL IDEALS AND PRACTICES.—The Muslims stand for the widest brotherhood. They invite all mankind into their social fraternity. They are prepared to share the benefits of their religion and society with any believer in the world. The Hindus represent the most arrogant form of social exclusiveness. They refuse to share the advantages of their social order with any but those who are born within their isolated fold. In this respect the Hindu social system is an insult not only to the Muslims but to all non-Hindus. This intolerant social attitude of the Hindus is irreconcilable with any scheme of abiding fraternisation with other communities. There can be no reciprocity of fellow-feeling even in regard to the fundamental principles of social association.

In its details the Hindu social order is simply a menace to freedom, unity and peace. The three thousand and odd castes and the larger number of sub-castes into which the Hindus are irretrievably divided keep nearly ninty-five per cent of the Hindus in perpetual disgrace and permanently condemned to an inferior social status. People of the lowest castes are worse than slaves. The Hindus are not a free people compared with other civilised peoples of the world. There are millions of Hindus themselves to whom it is a shame and a disaster to have to belong to the Hindu fold. Every child born in Hindu society is at the very moment and by the very fact of its birth and without any other consideration whatsoever permanently branded with a caste-label and a caste-status which make it contemptible in the eyes of all self-respecting men and women. Neither the Muslims nor any other community will willingly agree to live in equal partnership with the Hindus, much less to put themselves in a position to be dominated by them so long as the Hindu social system is determined by the rules of caste. The Hindus have no ideal of social unification for themselves or for others. They stand for inequality, disunion, and segregation of caste from caste and of the entire Hindu society from the rest of the world.

PRESENT POLITICAL OUTLOOK.—The present political outlook of the two communities, vitiated by the reckless propaganda of some of their leaders is not helpful to the cause of either Hindu-Muslim rapprochement or Indian independence. The Muslims, with honourable exceptions, seem to be incapable of conceiving a political state. Religious

books and religious teachers are still their highest authority in this world and in the next. An Islamic confederacy appears to be their loftiest ideal of state organisation. The Indian Muslims have not realised that the days of Khilafats and theocracies are gone and the world would not tolerate a revival of those disastrous regimes. They have yet to learn to think in terms of a political, economic or social state. The entire world has a right to oppose and suppress any move to establish a theocracy of religious fanaticism and the rule of so-called sacred books and dead teachers in preference to the rule of human intelligence and the growing consciousness of human unity. The Muslims in other parts of the world have changed or are changing. In India, they are trying to revive the ghosts of the past. Their present move to establish an independent sovereign Muslim State in India with hopes of linking it up with the Muslim countries outside in a world confederacy of Muslims is a menace to world peace and freedom and will be so viewed by all.

Let every God-fearing Musalman ponder over the following warning uttered by that great soul, Mrs. Annie Besant :

" But since the Khilafat agitation, things have changed and it has been one of the many injuries inflicted on India by the encouragement of the Khilafat crusade, that the inner Muslim feeling of hatred against " unbelievers " has sprung up naked and unashamed as in the years gone by. We have seen revived as guide in practical politics the old Muslim religion of the sword, we have seen the dragging out of centuries of forgetfulness the old

exclusiveness, claiming the Jazirut-Arab the Island of Arabia, as a holy land which may not be trodden by the polluting foot of a non-Muslim. We have heard Muslim leaders declare that if the Afghans invaded India, they would join their fellow believers and would slay the Hindus who defended their motherland against the foe ; we have been forced to see that the primary allegiance of the Musalmans is to Islamic countries not to our motherland. The world has gone beyond such so-called theocracies, in which God's commands are given through a man. The claim now put forward by Musalman leaders that they must obey the laws of their particular Prophet above the laws of the State in which they live is subversive of civic order and the stability of the State ; it makes them bad citizens for their centre of allegiance is outside the Nation and they cannot, while they hold the views proclaimed by Maulana Mohamed Ali and Shaukat Ali, to name the most prominent of these Muslim leaders, be trusted by their fellow citizens. If India were independent the Muslim part of the population—for the ignorant masses would follow those who appealed to them in the name of their Prophet—would become an immediate peril to India's freedom. Allying themselves with Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Persia, Iraq, Arabia, Turkey and Egypt and with such of the tribes of Central Asia who are Musalmans, they would rise to place India under the rule of Islam—those in British India being helped by the Musalman in Indian States—and would establish Musalman rule . . . there is no place in a civilised land for people who believe that their religion teaches them to murder, rob, rape, burn or drive away out of the

country those who refuse to apostatise from their ancestral faiths, except in its schools under surveillance, or in its gaols. The Thugs believed that their particular form of God commanded them to strangle people—especially travellers with money. . . . Such laws of God cannot be allowed to override the laws of a civilised country, and people living in the twentieth century must either educate people who hold these Middle Age views or else exile them."*

The Hindu cry of Hindustan is as misguided and suicidal as that of the Pakistan. We have no Buddhistan or Christistan or Islamistan anywhere. The utter foolishness of this agitation is echoed in the cries of Sikhistan, Dravidastan, Harijanstan and similar schemes for splitting up the country and the peoples into religious and social nations which are being propagated as a direct reaction to the Hindustan move. These fantastic proposals are opposed to the very idea of a political state. They serve only to rouse the passions of the multitude and emphasise their antagonisms. The Hindu politicians have no useful programme of Hindu unity. They defiantly refuse to consider such programmes because they know that they will have to come face to face with the social and religious injustices and exploitations which are a worse form of slavery than any political domination. The Hindu politicians have not the zeal for the revolutionary changes without which the Hindus cannot become a free people, nor have they the courage to oppose the orthodox Hindu imperialists, nor do they want to tell the exploited Hindu masses that they have no hopes of emancipation in the near future. The only other course open to

*Pages 301—305, The Future of Indian Politics, by Annie Besant.

them is to frighten the Hindus into activity and some sort of unity by holding out threats of Muslim oppression and destruction of Hindu religion and culture. They have no worth-while ideal of substantial freedom and democracy. Until recently the satanic British Imperialism was the ghost employed by the politicians to rally the Hindus for the political struggle. That was found to be insufficient. Many millions of Hindus refused to be hoodwinked. The Harijans preferred British Imperialism to Hindu slavery. The non-Brahmans saw in these manœuvres a repetition of the old story of the Hindu imperialists striving to set up Varnashrama Raj. Hence many Hindus continued to be sceptical and unenthusiastic about political independence. When the Muslims, in their pardonable disgust of the incorrigible disunion and weaknesses of the Hindus, openly demanded separation from them, the Hindu Imperialists rushed to the front and used the occasion to excite and frighten the Hindus to unite against the Muslims. Hindustan is their bombastic retort to Pakistan.

For many centuries the Hindus have not known what true freedom or self-respect or national spirit is. Ever since the castes became their established social order, they have lived under an imperialistic regime in which a handful of superior men always monopolised power, wealth, enlightenment, religion and freedom, and used these advantages to suppress and exploit the Hindu masses. That arrangement has continued in spite of the British rule. The Hindus have as yet no ideal of a free people and a free nation according to modern notions. The replacement of British Imperialism by Hindu Imperialism is their highest ambition.

तिथि	संख्या	तिथि	संख्या

Let us examine the nationalist politicians. Have they done anything more than the Hindu Imperialists? They want a united India and yet they are for splitting up the country into distinct cultural provinces and linguistic areas. Many of them have already agreed to exclude the citizens of one province from the services and even educational facilities of other provinces. Even the Universities are to be moulded by the culture and linguistic prejudices of the provinces. In fact, the nationalists started the cry of separate cultures and languages and separate political divisions corresponding to them, before the Muslims took it up. The national spirit in education was expressed not in founding a national University but a Hindu University, which served to provoke the communal rivalry of the Muslims and induced them to establish their Muslim University. Has the Hindu University done any good to the Hindus at least? Has it helped to bring a more reasonable attitude into Hindu society and religion, or to remove their outstanding injustices, or to unite the Hindu peoples, or to redeem the down-trodden classes from their degradation and slavery? Or has it simply emphasised the traditional imperialistic aspirations of the Hindu Masters and stimulated rival feelings among the Muslims? Nationalism has yet to discover an inspiring programme of unification and freedom.

To crown these incredible failures, the nationalists come out with their arrogant assumption and loud proclamation that India, which means Hindu India, is a unique country, has a unique culture and religion, has a unique past unequalled in the history of the world, and a unique race of extraordinary

men and women with ideals social, religious, political and economic which are also unique. Our self-conceited patriots would have nothing of the wicked modern civilisation. They will solve all problems in a unique way and, what is more, will save the world too in an equally unique manner. Instead of encouraging ideas of freedom, democracy and human brotherhood, the national spirit has fostered eccentric notions of the uniqueness of the past, uniqueness of the present and uniqueness of the future and antagonised not only the Muslims but the entire thinking world by the ridiculous audacity of the claims. The descendants of those who produced the Vedas and the Upanishads have gone to all parts of the globe and set up great states and civilisations. The missionaries of Buddhism who made India great in the past, have abandoned this unfortunate country and founded prosperous communities and religions in the East and the West. The present generation of Hindus have no special claim to any of the great things of the past. They have rejected their great teachers and their teachings and their lofty culture and religion, and adopted the false civilisation of caste and priestcraft, and brought about the downfall of the country. Even to-day they are passionately clinging to these untruths and iniquities. Even in their slavery, they are advocating imperialism and Varnashrama Raj. The Hindus including the nationalists have yet to learn that they are no better than the rest of humanity and in some respects are worse. They have to humble themselves in order to learn from others, work with others and march with others as fellow-sinners and fellow-pilgrims groping towards light and peace.

A free and united Hindu people alone can expect co-operation and respect from the Muslims. Without emancipating the Hindus India cannot be free. Without nationalising Hundu life India cannot be a nation. The Indian problem, which affects the well being of 400 million human beings cannot be solved on a Hindu or a Muslim basis or on the two together. It is a world problem and should be approached from a world standpoint along lines which lead to world unity and peace. It should be viewed as an integral part of a New World Order and tackled with the co-operation of those nations of the world who are for freedom, justice and brotherhood.

Chapter XIX

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY VICTIMISED BY BRAHMANISM

The Theosophical Society was a power in the world, and its influence was nowhere so great as in India where it seemed for a time to hold the nation's destiny in its hands. Its contribution to the Indian renaissance has been very valuable. It had the great advantage that Indians could welcome it as a friend and well-wisher above all sectarian differences, and not committed to any definite creed. Its broad human outlook, its international character, its scientific attitude towards religion, its admiration for the ancient Hindu religion, its bold leadership in all the spheres of nation-building activity, gave the society a place in the hearts of the best men of all India within a few years of its establishment. The

revival of Hindu self-consciousness that followed in its wake wherever Colonel Olcott or Mrs. Besant carried its message, penetrated into all departments, social, educational, religious and political, and produced deep impressions on the policies, not only of popular movements but also of the government. For the first time in the history of India a religious leadership with all the prestige of scientific knowledge seemed to have come from the West to revive the ancient teachings, to rouse the dormant pride of the Hindus and call them to assert their inalienable right to an honourable place among the civilisations and religions of the world. Even those who did not approve of all the things that Mrs. Besant did, saw in the Theosophical Society an organisation of great value for the modernisation of Hindu life. The immemorial past, clouded in mystery and ignorance, seemed to live again as if electrified by contact with the spirit of the best in modern civilisation. The missing links of Hindu cultural evolution were supplied, and the educated Hindus realised that they had a continuous national existence of many millennia and were not mere scattered remnants of a dead past. Theosophy discovered for them a treasure of wisdom and strength which lay buried under the debris of neglect and dilapidation unknown to the rightful owners of that inheritance. But those days are gone.

The society has receded into a quiet corner of the nation's life, where a few votaries do it formal homage as in a Hindu temple. The lodge buildings in the important towns of India which used to hum with life and love present a deserted appearance, and their libraries seem to have attained Nirvana with

their life work completed in this world. This phenomenon with a meteor like rising into prominence and an abrupt sinking back into unimportance before it has achieved anything substantial in pursuance of its avowed objects, has its significant lessons to the world, and more especially to India and the Hindus who can see in the fate of the society one more proof of the deadly effect of Brahmanism on all liberal and democratic movements. The history of the Theosophical Society in India, if it ever comes to be written in its undiluted truth, will be an enlightening study in the subtle workings of Brahmanism, its capacity to capture the imagination of the curious, to give a show of success and immediate power to any movement, and lead it on to a position of temporary triumph, but, equally quickly reduce it to lifeless forms and mystic formulas more useful as a means of exploiting the credulous than of exploring the Truth or realising a greater life in this world.

The society found its early Indian leaders among the followers of Brahmanism who succeeded in capturing it as effectively as they did the Buddhist organisations twenty centuries ago. Colonel Olcott with his Buddhistic leanings and practical American democracy was able to prevent the society from abdicating its independence into the hands of Hindu metaphysicians. But Mrs. Besant was early initiated by Indian experts into the mysteries of Yoga and priestcraft which inevitably dragged her to the blind alleys and dangerous pitfalls of Brahmanism—caste, priestcraft and false philosophy, until in her theosophy came to be closely associated, if not identified, with the fantastic claims and theories of Puranic Hinduism. We are not concerned with the

personal attachments of Mrs. Besant or others to secret cults. Our remarks will be confined to their influence on the work of the society.

The Theosophical Society was founded with the three well-known objects :

(1) To form a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour;

(2) To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science; and

(3) To investigate unexplained laws of nature and powers latent in man.

These objects have a great meaning to thoughtful Hindus; they touch a vital chord in their national life. The intuitive appreciation of the society by great Indians was due in a great measure to the fact that it promised to tackle exactly those big problems on the solution of which depended the future of the country and to open up an avenue of closer association between the East and the West, between religion and science, for the common good of humanity. If the society had earnestly pursued its first object of creating a nucleus of brotherhood, it could have brought under its banner all the enlightened and liberal minds of the Hindus and started a programme of enduring work with positive value to India. Caste is a form of slavery. Every small success achieved towards its ultimate abolition will rank with the noble efforts and sacrifices which led to the freeing of mankind from slavery. But the society, instead of making an honest attempt to face the problem boldly, preferred to canvass the support of the orthodox Hindus, as that yielded immediate prestige and power. In fact it appeared to have so

far compromised its original ideal as to accept the caste system as a natural and beneficial institution. Mrs. Besant by her comparison of Eastern castes with Western classes, her explanations of untouchability, prohibition of intermarriage and inter-dining, and her toleration of these differences in Theosophical activity, has done more to strengthen the hands of Brahmanism than to serve the cause of brotherhood.

There were distinguished Brahman leaders who had joined the society in their devotion to the cause of human brotherhood which they felt was the greatest and most urgent need of Hindu society. Even they, under the compromising influence of the society lost their enthusiasm for reform of the caste system and began to give back to Brahmanism that allegiance which they had given up in their original yearning for a united Hindu community. Before long the society was thrown open to people who did not sincerely believe in the possibility of human brotherhood, who observed all the inequalities and untruths of caste and yet preached fraternity from Theosophical platforms. Even untouchability came to be explained as a justifiable device of the highly evolved Hindus to save themselves from the unholy magnetic pollution caused by the defiled bodies of the low castes. The scheme of subtle bodies, etheric haloes, personal magnetism, mental transmutations, reincarnations and other psychic theories were utilised as arguments to justify the exclusion of the Hindu untouchables from society and civilisation. Instead of fighting caste and promoting human brotherhood, the society by its toleration of the Hindu castes and their concomitants has unwittingly

given a new lease of life to the forces which deny brotherhood. This was its initial colossal blunder in regard to its attitude to Indian problems.

We have noted that priestcraft is the second important plank of Brahmanism. Already in the time of Madame Blavatsky, the society had a predisposition to priestcraft in the form of psychic phenomena, occult powers, physical intercourse with invisible masters, and so forth. During the time of Mrs. Besant all the branches of Hindu priestcraft got their share of Theosophical recognition. Idolatry was justified and adopted ; the power of Mantras or mystic verses was admitted and their use popularised ; the rituals and ceremonies observed by the Hindus were interpreted as genuine methods of communicating with Devas or departed souls ; the efficacy of flower, water, light, incense and other ingredients and formulas of Hindu worship to produce occult effects in unseen worlds was proclaimed. The society's lecturers gave a new scientific status to the practices of priests. We are not here concerned with the theoretical validity or truthfulness of the principles inculcated by the society on these matters. The practical result of the society's activities among the Hindus has been a revival of idolatry, ritualism and belief in secret methods, all of which as parts of popular religion are bound to prove debasing, lead to superstition and be misused for exploitation. These things are as old as Rama and Krishna and the Hindus needed no encouragement to pursue their hereditary jokes and self-deceptions. Every great teacher has attempted to wean them from these pitfalls and called upon them to trust in the more honest method of self-culture

and service. The society, without intending it, has given an appearance of respectability and scientific validity to numerous items in the armoury of priestly exploitation. Unproven claims of psychic efficacy have been made on behalf of many a practice which could have been better allowed to die a natural death in the interests of true religion.

There are even now in India, many Sadhus who are wasting their lives in the endeavour to convert base metal into gold, to attain divine powers or Siddhi, and discover hidden treasure. Hindu books can give formulas and methods and courses of training for all these, and thousands of credulous people have ruined their own and other peoples' lives in the mad pursuit of psychic power and wealth. The society has fared no better than some of these Sadhus who make big claims and die a poor death. Priestcraft has attractions even to the scientifically minded, but when one once succumbs to its temptations there is no limit to the degradation it will bring upon its votary. It had already acquired a vicious hold on the Hindu mind and the society has only strengthened its strangulating grip.

The development of a system of metaphysics on all fours with the Brahmanical schools and the Puranas completed the process of subjection to the orthodox forces of Hinduism. We do not presume to say whether these so-called investigations and speculations have served or have not served any useful purpose to the expert seeker of truth or to the antiquarian. In India these are primitive entertainments and the society has not succeeded in making them any more useful to the world at large.

If the society had pursued a more practical

programme based on its three objects, it could have rendered immense service to India and humanity at large. The first object should have justified an honest stand against caste until the Hindus had at least as much freedom and equality among them as the Christians and the Muhammadans enjoy in their respective communities. American democracy and European science should have been put to better use than propping up an undemocratic and unscientific social order.

A comparative study of religions and philosophies as contemplated in the second object, would have helped the Hindus to establish more intimate contact with the Muhammadans and the Christians and solve the most difficult problem India has to face in her progress to national unity. But so far the society has failed to make any substantial contribution to this most vital of subjects, with which is bound up India's future and the reconciliation of the East and the West.

A scientific investigation into the practical value or ascertainable results, motives, and character of the huge system of ceremonies, rites, mystic formulas, secret processes, and cults practised openly or in secret in temples or by individuals, throughout the length and breadth of India, would have enabled the society to lead the Hindus out of the veritable maze of superstitions, deceptions and exploitations into which generations of unscrupulous priests have led them. India wanted brotherhood instead of caste and untouchability; Hindu-Muslim and Hindu-Christian unity instead of a revival of Puranic cosmogony; and a more rational system of worship of the One God instead of the thousands of idols of

gods, goddesses and demons and their wives and children with their favourite dishes and pastimes.

The Theosophical Society, if it had cared to work for its declared objects in the spirit of democracy and science, could have continued to play a prominent part in the re-making of India. But it has thrown in its lot with Brahmanism or been victimised by it and lost, for the time being, the chance of serving India. It can yet make a determined stand for its own ideals, give up all dilly-dallying with caste and priestcraft, and take its rightful place as an agency for the reconstruction of human society on the principle of brotherhood applied to all the facts and functions of collective life, state, religion, science and philosophy. It can yet give up its fascination with psychic revelations and take to scientific investigations and practical work, but not until it has abandoned its partnership with Hindu orthodoxy.

Chapter XX

THE CAUSE OF HINDU DOWNFALL

Having already traced the historical sequence of the prominent steps which, one by one, led to the loss of Hindu ascendancy in India, there is little necessity to seek for the cause of Hindu downfall apart from those facts of history. It is true that we should not judge the ancient Hindu State by the standards of modern civilisation ; but at the same time we cannot forget the fact that the Hindus, of whom we know anything, were not an uncivilised people slowly growing out of barbarism and entitled

to be judged leniently like the modern peoples of the West, who emerged into civilised existence only in recent centuries after long years of terrible struggle, suffering and self-sacrifice in establishing freedom of thought and action. The Hindus had evolved high ideals of religion, social relations and national life many centuries before Christ, and at no time in their history was there a lack of teachers to remind them of their duties to God and man. At every crisis in their progress, leaders of undisputed moral and intellectual eminence have appeared and roused the conscience of the rulers and the ruled to the evils which were undermining the stability of the nation. No people had more warnings of their inevitable doom and more extended opportunities of retrieving the disaster than the Hindus, but warnings produced no effect and opportunities were callously disregarded. The failures and punishments which attended their career of unrighteousness did not make them turn back from the fatal pursuit of power and pleasure at the cost of the country's peace and freedom. That the present tendencies of the Hindus do not show any great improvement on the intrinsically false and perilous policy of their ancestors, and that what little there is has been practically forced upon them by foreign influences, makes their past offences almost unpardonable.

The ancient leaders of Hindu society started with the glorious traditions of a culture of high thinking and simple living, of the sanctity of human life and the unity of mankind. They were not ignorant of the natural and ethical laws of human progress and decline which other peoples discovered in much later centuries. They were not without definite

guidance for realising their social ideals in the organisation of the State and religion. All the circumstances seemed to be in their favour. They could have developed into a great people, and instead of sitting at the feet of other nations as they do now, they could have become the temporal as well as spiritual leaders of mankind. But they deliberately chose the wrong path; they defied the teachings of their prophets and seers; they refused to recognise that the misfortunes which overtook them were just punishments for their wickedness and folly; they persisted in their traditional iniquities; they lost their freedom and were trampled under foot by invader after invader; they saw their country pass into the hands of their victorious enemies; they knew that the Hindu nation was being hewn away limb by limb by the Muhammadans and the Christians who not infrequently came as saviours of the oppressed, avengers of wrong, and liberators of those in serfdom; they looked on calmly when the whole structure of Hindu civilisation was rotting inside owing to the ravages of time, the decay of life and truth and the poison of corruption and vice.

The British rule gave them another opportunity to make amends for their past sins. But as the "Amrita Bazar Patrika" wrote in 1879: "What can the doctor do when the patient is already stiff and cold? India is dead to all sense of honour and glory. India is an inert mass which no power of late has been able to move. India has no heart and those of her children who have yet any portion of it left, have been deadened by blank despair. Talk of regenerating India to the Indians! You might as well talk to the sands of the sea."* Sixty years

*Page 79, India—A Nation.

have passed since the above was written and we hug the fond belief that things have changed and we have awakened to a sense of duty and recovered our sense of honour and truth. We proclaim we have risen from the grave. But have we? Have we converted ourselves to a better faith than that of the past? Mahatma Gandhi may make the nation look great by his own greatness; other leaders like him have done so many times before. But as they have disappeared, Mahatmaji also will disappear, leaving the Hindus as obstinate in their follies as ever. What has the Hindu nation learned after all the years of schooling under foreign masters? Has it definitely given up the ancient evils, at least the worst of them? Has it announced a new life and a new hope for the future at least? Has it decidedly allied itself with the forces of freedom and brotherhood and abandoned its hereditary alliance with the dark powers of domination and exploitation? To answer these questions, it is necessary to ennumerate some of the characteristics of Hindu supremacy in the past and compare them with the present tendencies.

(1) The seed of Hindu decay was sown four or five thousand years ago when the ancient priests, the leaders and aristocrats of society, separated themselves from the homogeneous body of the people as a distinct nation of Brahmans and established a monopoly of learning, political power and religious authority, with pretensions to superior birth, and claimed a hereditary right to reverence and submission from all the rest of their countrymen. Has this changed? Are not the Brahmans even now an exclusive nation by themselves, with interests which are antagonistic to the freedom and progress of the

other Hindus and with pretensions to the hereditary superiority which their ancestors of yore claimed?

(2) The ancient priests claimed an exclusive right to decide social and religious matters and rigorously restricted the power of the Kshatriya State so that the latter could never effectively do anything for the raising of the Hindu masses. Do we not even now passionately cling to that fatal theory of the freedom of so-called religion and society from state interference, and consider it a privilege to defy the right of the Government or the Indian National Congress to alter the traditional arrangement of Hindu life however ruinous it may be? Just as the ancient Hindu State was used to suppress the natural aspirations of the Hindu masses to acquire the learning, refinement and freedom, which the superior castes enjoyed, are we not using the modern state to preserve our hereditary advantages, and perpetuate the disabilities of our Hindu brethren in the name of ancient law and custom? There is such little hope of improvement in some of the Hindu states ruled by Hindu Rajas that the people would gladly see their country annexed to British India.

(3) In those ancient days, by craft and cunning and force, they inflicted on society a social system which while it preserved the tyrannical supremacy of the few, divided the people into thousands of petty castes beyond the possibility of reunion by any but the most revolutionary means, and kept them disunited so that the privileged classes might build their arrogant overlordship over a distracted populace. Other civilised peoples based their claims to greatness on the gospel that all men are born free, equal and independent; but the Hindu social order

was a negation of this truth, and stood on the rule that every man, except of the highest caste, was born a serf, low and dependant. Hindu mentality remains the same. For the mere pleasure of caste prestige and the petty profits the system yields to a few, they are prepared to sacrifice all noble sentiments and enforce their birthright to keep their house divided against itself. As a nation the present generation is even worse than their forefathers. The number of castes is increasing; their mutual rivalries are deepening.

(4) The ancient priests mutilated, interpolated and destroyed the sacred books and their teachings and fabricated spurious Shastras to deceive the people, cover up their own wickedness, strengthen the bonds of superstition and servility on the masses, and enhance their own surreptitious hold on them in order to gain their selfish ends. That process has not stopped yet. Histories are being written to whitewash and even glorify our past follies; new theories of philosophy and science and culture are being adumbrated to justify the injustices we inflict on our brethren; all the advantages we have derived from the inspiration of Western progress and ideals are being used, not to end the old wrongs but to explain and support them. Are we not working more for a revival than for a reform or regeneration?

(5) Our ancestors inflicted untold insult and cruelty on the women of India in the name of God and religion. Their lot is still bad enough. They are not yet outside the danger zone.

(6) Our forefathers prostituted the temples, the monasteries and other religious institutions for purposes of self-aggrandisement, spoliation of their

co-religionists and destruction of the growing sense of human brotherhood, and reduced religion and spirituality to false metaphysics, cunning ritualism and hypocritical observances in the pursuit of their insatiable appetite for self-glorification and material profit and to keep the credulous Hindu peoples tied to their heels. Do our present-day Hindu temples and Mutts serve any better purpose? Is not the organised religion of these nation-wide institutions a system of unmitigated superstition and deception for extorting money from their devotees? Do any of them help the individual or the nation to rise above their present degradations?

(7) Hindu leaders of the 19th century used the British Government, its judicial, legislative and executive machinery to increase and strengthen the chains of inferiority with which their Hindu brethren were bound and re-establish on a more stable foundation of law and constitution their own inalienable superiority. Are not the vast majority of the orthodox Hindus doing the same thing to-day? Do they not appeal to all the principles which the British Government holds sacred, in order to perpetuate the differences, the oppressions, the rivalries, the insults and degradations to which many millions of Hindus are abject victims? Under the protecting wing of the British power and in the name of the much abused doctrine of non-interference, the Hindu Rajas and the high caste Hindus throughout India are doing their utmost to safeguard the dignities and privileges of caste on the one side and enforce its indignities and restrictions on the other. Is it yet time to say there has been a change of heart?

(8) The intellectual leaders of Hindu society

successfully opposed and mostly frustrated all the successive efforts made by eminent teachers, saints and influential institutions to awaken the Hindus to a sense of their own degradation and organise them for the life of a free and self-respecting community. They are doing the same thing now also. Raja Ramohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda have thundered forth their messages and thrilled the people with a new spirit. But they are gone; Hindu life has all its old crookedness. Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest among such, is revered because he alone can lead us in the fight for Swaraj. The Hindus are not prepared to carry out even the most elementary of his teachings. The temple-entry movement is an instance. In fact, no Hindu has any right to prevent another Hindu from entering a Hindu temple for worship. The present practice of excluding many millions of Hindus from the ordinary temples has nothing to justify it. It does no good to anybody. The opening of the temples to all does not injure anybody. And yet the Hindus would rather sacrifice their national freedom and insult their great leader and saint than abandon their demoniac obstinacy. Hundreds of teachers have preached and warned them. Many new sects and schools of faith have come into existence in protest. The orthodox Hindu classes and masses are as adamantine in their superstitious selfishness as their ancient progenitors. They will obey the policeman more willingly than Mahatma Gandhi as has been evidenced by the peaceful opening of some temples with police help.

(9) Our predecessors denied the solace and benefits of education, sanitation, good water and air,

use of tanks, wells and roads to many millions of their Hindu brethren, killed their self-respect by forcing them to wear most infamous badges of inferiority, stunted their growth, suppressed their manhood, and violated all human feelings by forcibly imposing upon fifty millions of innocent Hindu men, women and children that most satanic of all injustices, hereditary untouchability. Every one of these crimes is being perpetrated throughout the length and breadth of Hindu India after two centuries of British rule. Do we now want complete independence to butcher our sheep or sell them to the Christians and the Muhammadans? One hundred million Hindu hands are raised to heaven in mute prayer that Hindu Raj may never return!

(10) In bygone days, the Hindu aristocrats degraded themselves by forcing degradation on their brethren, destroyed their own power by denying liberty to the bulk of their countrymen, lost their freedom by suppressing the freedom of others, lost their sense of honour, patriotism, good and evil by prohibiting these sentiments in their co-religionists. Who can say that our attitude is quite different from theirs? The civilised states of the earth are aiming at achieving the greatest good of the greatest number but the Hindu rule is the greatest good of the smallest number, with as a corollary, the least good of the largest number. Just a handful of Hindus occupying the highest castes can feel proud of being Hindus. They obtain all the honour and all the benefits. To the vast majority of the Hindus even now, it is a disgrace to be a Hindu; it is a daily insult, a perpetual degradation, an unalterable inferiority.

We, the high caste Hindus, have trampled

under foot the head that bowed to us in reverence, cursed in our hearts the simple, trustful folks who craved our blessings, brought ignorance and sin to the homes which welcomed us as angels. Instead of blessing we have cursed ; instead of helping we have oppressed ; instead of educating we have destroyed the capacity to learn ; instead of giving we have extorted ; instead of raising we have suppressed all attempts to rise ; instead of uniting we have divided ; instead of embracing our brethren we have kicked them ; instead of delivering we have betrayed ; instead of working for freedom we have forged fetters of slavery ; and what is more, knowing all these things, witnessing around us the wreckage of our own crime and folly, realising that India, the Hindus and Hinduism are sinking deeper and deeper into helplessness, we are entrenching ourselves in a mad fury behind those ancient sins which have besmeared our past with failure and shame.

The Hindus fell because they deserved to fall ; India had to be saved from the deadening grip of priestly imperialism. The Hindu masses had to be emancipated from their hereditary thraldom. The cause of true religion and democracy had to be vindicated. The path had to be cleared for a greater national life and international co-operation.

THE MENACE OF
HINDU IMPERIALISM

[CONSTRUCTIVE THOUGHTS AND EFFORTS]

CHAPTER XXI

TEST OF HINDU NATIONALISM

Nationality is the capacity of a people to function and develop as an organic unit. As this capacity is ever changing and growing and seeking fulfilment in various modes, nationality is more of the nature of a dynamic impulse to realise a common individuality than of a static unity already attained. It is not so much a feature as a feeling. It is not merely a heritage of the past but more a power of the present. Its importance is not in what has been achieved but in its hopes of future achievements. The nationalism which seeks consolation in the records of bygone ages is like the pauper who delights in going over the pages of old account books relating to his thriving business prior to his insolvency. The true national spirit is to be seen in a persistent desire to effect closer union and association among the individuals and groups constituting society, in a growing sense of community of interests, social, religious, economic, political and other, in an instinctive opposition to forces within and without the nation which tend to endanger its solidarity, and in the ability to evolve new ideals and institutions to embody the spirit

of the collective life. The capacity to grow, to expand, to assimilate the helpful, and oppose the harmful influences is in fact a truer symptom of national life than an obstinate clinging to mere existence and past glories. Nationalism is not a passive sentiment of love for a great past, but an active yearning for a greater future, a collective will to conquer fresh fields, to explore new regions of self-expression. Political nationality is an idea of recent growth. It emphasises territorial unity and unity of government. As a result of the impact of European nations, their literature, political ideals and institutions, and the subjection for the first time in her history of all India to a central ruling power under the British, Indians have acquired a new consciousness of territorial and political unity which we call Indian Nationalism.

But Hindu Nationalism is another distinct phenomenon and has a history stretching from ages immemorial through an unbroken succession of sages, kings, teachers, reformers and philosophers, down to the latest movements of Hindu revival and unification such as those inaugurated by Dayananda Saraswati of the North and Sree Narayana Gurudev of Malabar. The unification of a vast humanity forming nearly a fifth of the world's population, and consisting of innumerable cultures, races, languages and religions as presented in India must necessarily be a slow process spread over many millennia and effected by different methods. In the foregoing pages we have attempted to draw the bare outlines of the important stages in the evolution of Hindu Nationalism, and depict the exhausting struggle it had to keep up all through the ages

against the domestic imperialism of the priestly class. Brahmanism like all imperialisms, though an eternal foe of nationalism, has not been an unmitigated evil. It has served even more than British Imperialism to enforce subjection of all the disunited peoples of this continent to a common socio-religious system, and thus create a consciousness of Hindu unity. Brahmanism has always served as a challenge to the national spirit, as a provocation to the country to unite and oppose its exploiters and seek new methods of consolidation and internal readjustments. Hindu Nationalism from the days of Rama and Krishna, in all its vicissitudes, has thus manifested itself as an undying opposition to all that Brahmanism stands for, just as much as Indian Nationalism has assumed the form of a revolt against British Imperialism. To sum up what we have described in the previous chapters for a clearer grasping of the principles Hindu Nationalism stands for, we may divide its history into four periods. (1) The Indo-Aryan, (2) the Indian or Buddhistic (3) The Mohammadan and (4) the British.

The earliest and the most glorious expression of the national spirit was seen in the hearty intermingling of the Aryas and the Indians and the founding of the Gangetic kingdoms mentioned in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata with their great Rishis, immortal kings, and divine heroes and heroines whose stories furnish perennial inspiration to the Hindus even at the present day. The prominent national heroes and heroines were Janaka, Rama, Sita, Krishna, the Pandavas and Draupati. The Upanishads and the original teaching of the Gita embody the ideals of that ancient nationalism.

It stood for (1) unfettered association and union of the Aryas and the Indians, and (2) for a religion of spiritual enlightenment, belief in the One Supreme Spirit and of salvation that could be obtained through purity and knowledge of the self. As against this were arrayed the priests who, (1) opposed association with the Indians whom they condemned as Dasyus or Sudras, (2) advocated the system of four castes, (3) set themselves up as a caste of Brahmans, (4) elaborated a religion of animal sacrifices combined with feasting, drinking, dancing and other indulgences, (5) split the Kshatriyas into two camps, and finally (6) caused the disastrous Mahabharata War. Their literature is found in the Brahmanas and some of the Sutras.

The second period of Buddhistic Nationalism covered about fourteen centuries from 600 B.C. to 800 A. D. The Buddha was the soul of the renaissance and the age was marked by glorious achievements in every sphere of national life—literature, arts, philosophy, science and industry, architecture and sculpture, education and religion, foreign relations and internal politics. Almost everything historical of which India can be proud was attained under the influence of Buddhistic Nationalism. The Brahmanical opposition to it was represented in, (1) the codification of Manu and the composition of some of the Sutras and Puranas and Dharma Shastras, (2) political revolutions, usurpations, plots and murders of kings, (3) encouragement of foreigners with idolatrous practices, (4) development of highly immoral and debasing secret rites called Tantrikism, (5) persecution of Buddhism, and (6) establishment of Rajput ascendancy and the religion of temples

with all the indulgences, and much more of the immoralities associated with the ancient sacrifices.

In the third period of Muhammadan ascendancy, the national spirit is represented by a succession of great teachers and saints beginning with Sree Shankaracharya and later on Ramanujacharya, Nanak, Chaitanya, Ramanand, Kabir, Eknath, Tukaram, Ramadas and others. Their nationalism stood for, (1) an intellectual synthesis of all the different schools of philosophy and religious sects, (2) opposition to priestcraft, (3) a practical religion of Bhakti or devotion to one God and the leading of a pure life, (4) ignoring of the caste differences, (5) development of the vernaculars, and (6) fraternisation with the Muhammadans and recognition of the identity of the spiritual teachings of both Hinduism and Muhammadanism. The Brahmanical revival was represented by many famous men such as Kumarila Bhatta, Madhavacharya, Sayanacharya and others. Most of the Puranas and the Dharma Shastras were composed in this period. Buddhism and Jainism were extirpated. The religion of the temples was everywhere established. Caste laws were promulgated and rigorously enforced. Sati, child-marriage and prohibition of widow remarriage were made compulsory. Slavery and the institution of dancing girls received a great impetus. Dark rites like human sacrifices and debasing secret rituals increased.

In the British period the Hindu national spirit found its first great exponent in Raja Ramohan Roy. The Brahma Samaj, which he founded, started with a revolt against idolatry and other forms of priestcraft, later on made a feeble protest against caste

and attempted a reconciliation with Christianity. Ramohan Roy had been greatly influenced by Muhammadanism and took a great interest in the Sufi authors. The movement did not penetrate to the masses. It was too much a business of the high caste Hindus for their own improvement to grow into a national power. After giving to India some of her most distinguished leaders and patriots, it has relapsed into passivity and some silent good work. The next and the more forceful national awakening was led by Dayananda Saraswati and his Arya Samaj. Its prominent feature was a bold exposure of the wickedness, deception, superstition, and immorality associated with temples, uncompromising condemnation of idolatry, and merciless exposure of the deceits and the vices of the secret sects. It condemned the castes based on birth and accepted the Vedas as the only true exposition of divine wisdom. "The true religion is found in the Vedas and the Upanishads which enjoin that learned persons should teach and preach truth to the people, and show them the necessity of abandoning falsehood and of doing good to all. The knowledge of the Vedas, good company, belief in virtue, self-control and pure character result in the obtainment of heaven."* The Arya Samaj has continued to this day to be a champion of Hindu Nationalism, mixed however, with an unbecoming animosity towards other faiths, which is not of course warranted by the broad principles of the founder.

Under British rule Brahmanism has acquired a constitutional status and the force of law. Caste distinctions have become mechanically rigid and caste-law the unwritten common law of all Hindus.

*Page 395, Satyarthaprakash, by Durgaprasad, 1908.

Though the spirit of Brahmanism is being undermined, its forms have become crystallised, legal, political and even economic values and meanings have been attached to social and religious customs, which have thus stolen a permanent place in the scheme of British Indian law and administration, from which they can be unseated only by direct state action.

No other country in the world can claim such a proud though tragic record of national life which has, through at least five thousand years, stood consistently and fought unflinchingly, undaunted by failures, for the same noble ideals of human brotherhood, a religion of righteousness and service devoid of unmeaning priestcraft, and the spirit of the widest tolerance between differing peoples and religions. These form the three tests of Hindu Nationalism:—(1) Opposition to caste, (2) opposition to priestcraft and idolatry, and (3) inter-religious tolerance and fraternisation. For many centuries nationalism stood its ground in spite of the deadly antagonism of the most powerful aristocracy known to history, and made India honoured among the nations of the world. Her vitality was, however, wasted in the protracted internal struggle and her own children flung open the flood-gates of foreign domination. The loss of political freedom has, for the time, subdued the national spirit. The two imperialisms, Brahmanical and British, placed one above the other, have fairly crushed all independent life out of the Hindu peoples, who have now no courage to own their own teachers or to speak out their mind's agony or to oppose the true enemies of their freedom. The nation's fate hangs, not indeed

on the foreign doctor who attends on her with due diligence but on the return to her bosom of her own children, young and old, high and low, in that spirit of brotherhood which alone will enable her to clasp them in one loving embrace and murmur through her tears of joy : "You quarrelled and parted, and I was dying. You have united and come back, I am happy."

CHAPTER XXII

THE LATEST PHASE OF HINDU NATIONALISM

SREE NARAYANA GURUDEV

1855—1928 A. D.

India has produced no nobler teacher, no bolder reformer, no holier saint, and above all no greater nation-builder than Sree Narayana Gurudev of Malabar. His life, work and teachings have a refreshing uniqueness combined with naturalness, and a sublime simplicity tinged with mystery which render them peculiarly interesting and profoundly instructive to students of Hindu Nationalism, to whom they offer ideals and methods of realising them which none else has so clearly and successfully demonstrated in recent centuries.

The chief results and lessons of his eventful career may be summarised thus: (1) Born among humble peasants, without the benefit of any kind of modern education, of wealth, of social influence or other advantages which bring success in life, he rose by virtue of his self-culture and love of humanity to

the highest position of respect a man can attain in this world, the position of one who was looked upon as a very incarnation of God and revered as such by many lakhs of people in his own life-time. He assumed no robes of saintliness, he initiated no disciples to be his obedient flag-bearers, he wrote no books to show his wisdom, he followed no mystic methods to impress the credulous. Born among simple rustics, he kept his simplicity unchanged unto death. But wherever he went he attracted thousands of people towards him and made them work out their own salvation in a hundred different ways. Wherever he went he gave consolation to the sick, cast out evil spirits, rescued the drunkard from his vice, encouraged the poor to persist in efforts at self-improvement, raised the low to a sense of freedom and equality with their fellow-men, healed differences and closed up ranks for united endeavours, inspired the rich and the poor to sacrifice their wealth according to their means for the common good, gathered honest workers to serve the community, and always kept sowing seeds of new ideals and aspirations which went deep into the hearts of his listeners, took root and brought forth giant trees with fruits and flowers, giving shelter to numberless people and adding beauty to their lives. He himself ever remained an embodiment of simple living and high thinking. No attempt was made to create an impression, to advertise his greatness, or attract followers. The reverence he gained was the unsolicited homage of all classes from the peasant to the prince whoever had occasion to see him, or listen to his words or benefit by his influence. He exemplified to what divine heights even the humblest of men

could rise by self-culture and love of humanity.

(2) He had to fulfil his mission among a people numbering about 23 lakhs in the west coast of India. They had been forced for many centuries to live outside the pale of civilisation, they had been denied education, denied freedom to walk along roads and touch tanks and wells, denied true religion and culture, and by all the forces of society, religion and the state kept down to a life of subjection, ignorance and degradation. The Guru worked among them in a way no other teacher did, and made them in his own life-time a nation of self-respecting men and women, who could not only work out their own salvation, but proudly point the way to the emancipation of all Hindus. He moved among them for over forty years, never stopping in any place continuously for more than a few weeks or months. In his daily conversations he told them the injurious customs which had to be given up, the superstitions they had to abandon and the beneficial habits they had to cultivate, and how they were to work for their own and the community's uplift. He addressed no meetings. His presence was sufficient, and his teachings spread from mouth to mouth and the people organised themselves in every place to carry out his casually given instructions. Thus he reformed their domestic and social life, abolished superstitions and bad customs and wasteful ceremonies, encouraged temperance and economy, created a yearning for knowledge and power, strengthened industrious habits, promoted public spirit, co-operation and union, and made their lives in all ways purer, richer and stronger. He gave them all the institutions they wanted for their

progress which Hindu society had refused to give them in all the past centuries—temples of pure worship, schools where they could learn ancient Sanskrit as well as modern English, local associations which taught them how to organise and govern themselves, missionaries to work for the common weal and preach a new life, priests who ministered to all their religious needs, and a new social and religious philosophy which they could hold up before the world with pride and confidence, and to which even the greatest of men bowed their heads with approbation and admiration.

They saved themselves and were enabled to take the lead in saving the whole of Hindu society in that part of India. Harijan uplift, temple entry, intermingling of castes, prohibition, fraternal relations with other religions, social reform, reform of temples and reform of Mutts of Sannyasins, all these and many similar movements were started and worked with permanent good results under the Guru's inspiration long before the Indian National Congress turned its attention to social questions. In half a century, the Guru's followers have become chiefly instrumental, in that part of the country, in achieving the most momentous reform of Hindu religion and society since the days of Bhuddhism—the opening of all temples in Travancore to all Hindus without distinction, the annihilation of untouchability and the practical destruction of caste restrictions in general, though their shadows continue to obsess the public mind.

(3) The third striking feature was that the Guru hardly ever condemned anything or attacked any one. He said what was the right thing to do, and

he showed how to do it. He demonstrated how the worst of institutions could be used to good purpose by intelligent men. Whether it was the caste, or a ceremony, or a temple or the Sannyasin, he was always constructing something fresh and useful out of the old so that no one even among the orthodox was provoked, no one had a word to say against him. He created a revolution before anybody knew its exact nature or consequences, without antagonising any one, or demolishing any doctrine or attacking any sect or creed. No other great teacher ever accomplished his mission so peacefully.

(4) Another remarkable character of the movement was that, though in its wider external manifestations it was confined to one of the Hindu communities, it was hailed by all classes of people, Hindus, Christians and Muhammadans, all of whom recognised in the Guru one of those great beings who shape the destinies of men. His was a mission which by its own intrinsic purity and universality rose above all distinctions of caste, race and creed and appealed to the soul in man. Its influence pervaded all societies and created a new era of social and intellectual freedom. The now famous motto of his teachings "One Race, One Religion, One God for man," has come to occupy the same place in Hindu nationalism as that of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity in European Nationalism.

(5) One more feature deserves a special mention. Though a saint and a religious man all his life, he was no dreamer. Though a great scholar and philosopher, he was always at his plough doing good to the world and making others do likewise. Holding his head above ordinary humanity, his hands were

ever engaged in ministering to the humble and the abandoned. Though wielding extraordinary spiritual powers, he was ever teaching his followers to attend to the little things of daily life. A mystic of mystics, and a mystery even to those closest to him, his external life was as prudent, disciplined and vigorous as that of a great general leading his forces to victory.

His distinctive contribution to Hindu Nationalism may be observed in his handling of the three great problems—the caste, the temple and the Mutt (monastery).

Abolition of Caste. We often think that caste is a divinely ordained institution or one of such hoary antiquity that it is almost impossible to change it. The Guru used to say it was all a silly phantom. Where is the so-called caste to be found, in men's body or mind or speech or action? There is no earthly means of ascertaining a man's caste unless he confessed it, for caste has no reality in the facts of life. It does not correspond to any ascertainable difference in men's condition whether mental or physical. It is a mere convention, and its sole support, as of all conventions, is the willing recognition we give to it. If we take away that recognition caste will disappear in no time. The life of joint stock company depends on its name and the legal "soul" given by the state to the ideal corporation. So is caste but a corporation name. It asserted its hold on the people when kings gave it legal value and validity ; it survives because the state continues to recognise it, and not because it has any positive merit of its own ; it will disappear when the state abolishes its active recognition. This teaching, he

put in his own pithy words thus: "There is in truth nothing like caste. Ask not, say not, think not caste." This seems quite impracticable at first sight and yet it is the most practicable, and probably the only means of solving the caste-problem. The Christians, the Muhammadans and the Buddhists have no caste distinctions. Many millions of Hindus have become casteless by joining these creeds. It is happening every day around us. The untouchable and the Brahman lose their castes and become brethren when the Christian father sprinkles on them the water of baptism. If a few drops of water can so effectively drive out caste for ever why should we suppose that it is adamantine or inevitable?

Some Christian converts in Travancore claimed the concessions allowed by the state to the "Depressed Classes." The question went up even to some members of the House of Commons in London. All were agreed in holding that there were no depressed classes among Christians. In a case which went up to the Madras High Court, caste-Hindu converts claimed to exclude non-caste converts from being seated along with them in the Church! If in such cases either the Government or the Court had given their approval to the observance of these distinctions, in a few years the Christian society would have become as caste-mad as the Hindus. In a few places where Catholic churches tolerated caste pretensions among their converts the evil has taken root, but because the state does not recognise these aberrations they gradually disappear. It is so with the entire caste system of the Hindus. There is no necessity to advocate inter-marriage and inter-dining. What is wanted is that nobody should have a right to prevent

or condemn inter-marriage and inter-dining. Restore to the Hindus their individual freedom to decide where they should marry or dine without being persecuted by any one; take away the legal values you have given to an imaginary classification; in a few years the community will solve the problem without any reformer telling them what to do. All public recognition of caste by the Government as well as society should be stopped. A Hindu should be no more than a Hindu, just as a Christian is a Christian only and a Muhammadan a Muslim, without caste qualifications tacked on. The state alone can abolish the present practice which is mainly a result of previous state influence.

"The survival of the Hindu peoples is dependent on their organisation into a community through national legislation which will re-emphasise the secular character of Hindu organisations and sweep away the dead customs which through misunderstanding have come to be identified with their religion."*

Reform of Temples. Temples are what we make of them. They are themselves immaterial things and can do neither good nor evil. If we are foolish, the priests will use them to encourage idolatry, to increase superstition, to exploit the ignorant. If we are wise, we ourselves may use them to instruct the people, to ennoble their lives, to abolish caste differences and unite them, to give them recreation as well as education, and increase their devotion to God as well as enthusiasm for work in this world. Because the temples fell into the hands of the priests who managed them, not for the public good but for

*Page 17, Hinduism and the Modern World, K. M. Panikkar.

oppressing and exploiting the public for private gain, they have become bad, detestable. The Guru built scores of temples, big and small, and demonstrated how they could be used for the uplift of the community in all directions. His temples became centres of all round public activity. They were surrounded by monasteries, schools, lecture halls, banks, dispensaries, libraries, rest houses, gardens and similar things which ennobled and enriched the collective life. The influence and resources of the temples were used for the good of the worshippers. The Guru used the temples, not to perpetuate but to demolish old superstitions and introduce reforms. Even idolatry could be abolished by having temples without idols or without priestcraft. The temples can be made a source of blessing in this world much more than in the next. That is the great teaching of his temple movement.

The Sannyasins and Service. The Guru did not encourage the old ideal of ascetics, who tried or pretended to live out of the ordinary world. He said that a Sannyasin should be a man of renunciation whose life is dedicated to the service of humanity. A few exceptional individuals may be allowed to experiment with their own lives in solitude. But the public monasteries or Mutts should be homes of service no less than of spiritual exercise. The Sannyasins should be missionaries of a new life and a new light. They should work among the people with all the ardour and purity of renunciation. His own wonderful life set an example to his followers of what could be achieved by a true Sannyasin. He lived always in the midst of work, and yet he was as free, composed and happy as if he was in a forest

hermitage. Though a man of God, he appeared to be immersed in the things of the world in order to help the poor and the ignorant. His prayer, his meditation, his spiritual aspirations, were all expressed in the life of helpfulness wherever he was. No saint has set a nobler example of service to humanity. No teacher sanctified selfless work more than he. He taught hardly anything in words, but every act of his was a lesson to those around him. "Religion is life and life is religion," seemed to be the one truth he silently proclaimed. He refused to make any difference between the good of this world and of the next. What is truly good here must be good there also. What is not really good now cannot be good hereafter in another existence. Bad practices and superstitious beliefs should not be justified by alleging a cause in the previous life and promising a benefit in the future. Man's duty is to take care of his life here and now, and the life hereafter will take care of itself. It was in this spirit that he wanted his followers to work for the making of their present lives healthier and richer. This attitude of his was expressed in the saying: "It matters little which religion a man follows provided it makes him better and better."

The philosophy of his mission is contained in the motto "One Race, One Religion, One God for man." This teaching of the Guru has become the inspiring faith of many lakhs of humble people, who though unable to realise its vast significance or visualise the consequences of its application, are yet staunch in their adherence to it. One Race pleads for a recognition in every sphere of the life of the solidarity and unity of humanity, not only as a

spiritual truth but as a fact in nature, as a feature of our origin and evolution. It calls upon us to forget the silly barriers of caste, creed, race and nationality which separate man from man and to strive for the growing realisation of universal brotherhood. The fact of natural unity having been asserted, One Religion demands of us the embodiment of that truth in the laws and institutions which regulate life. The fundamental laws of mind and body are common to all mankind. The spiritual truths are the same. The economic, political and ethical laws also must be essentially identical. To that consummation we must direct our aspirations and endeavours. The soul of civilisation and progress which should be ever present before our mental vision as the eternal unifying bond in the midst of superficial differences and temporary antagonisms should be a living faith in the One Supreme Being, the Highest Truth, the One God. These teachings were not meant to be merely a doctrine to be piously believed and cherished in the heart. They were to be used to test and justify every step of our progress, every measure of reform, every effort of reconstruction, and he himself did not teach anything of which he did not set an example.

Sree Narayana Guru occupies a distinct place in the history of Hindu culture and the successive attempts made by great teachers to consolidate the peoples of India into a united nation. As in the case of individuals, so of nations, the first preparation for greatness is the cultivation of ethical ideals, the purification of the heart, the attainment of moral eminence. The Buddha gave the desired impetus in

this direction. His moral precepts shone above all distinctions of caste, sect, creed, race and country and embraced all humanity in its sublime appeal to the heart of man. They have been accepted by the best peoples of all nations as the essence of true religion. That Righteousness alone exalteth nations as well as individuals has become the faith of good men and women the world over. Faith in the efficacy of the righteous life to give salvation has become universal among the Hindus in spite of their differences in leadership and contradictions in theology.

When it was time to give an intellectual basis to the moral convictions and elevate the peoples' passive faith in virtue to a dynamic will to know the Truth and to realise the Truth, Sree Sankaracharya appeared, and by his philosophical teachings gave to the Hindus a common intellectual outlook and instilled into their minds a spirit of broad toleration, mutual appreciation and compromise, in addition to the self-reliance which has become the bed-rock of the highest Hinduism ever since.

But the Righteousness of the Buddha and the Wisdom of Sree Sankara lacked a human society to thrive in. Their influence lies deep down in the inner springs of the nation's soul and has not yet found any adequate expression in the organised life of Hindu society. Organised Hinduism and organised Hindu society have never been in consonance with Dharma (Righteousness) or Satya (Truth). The Hindus, both as individuals and as a nation have two distinct existences: the spiritual life prompted by the best sentiments, by the boldest aspirations, but decaying beneath the impenetrable debris of

soul-crushing customs and enforced bondage ; and the social life rising like the Himalayas is silent mockery of human ambitions in defiance of Dharma and Satya, over the heads of its prostrate devotees, making the Hindus contemptible pigmies in a world of proud freedom and joint enterprises. To this day the Hindus have not succeeded in evolving a social order substantially consistent with the teachings of their Mahatmas, and if ever the Hindus become a really great nation once more, it will be only when they have succeeded in reconstructing their collective life in accordance with the fundamental ideas of Righteousness and Truth, that is, offering justice and equality and freedom to all, man and woman, strong and weak, and seeking the highest Truth in the manifestations, activities and institutions of life no less than in its inner impulses and intellectual pursuits. Sree Narayana Guru has started the work of reconstruction.

India cannot live in the spirit alone. She must have a body strong and healthy enough to embody the spirit. She must make her organised existence social, religious and political an expression of her spiritual aspirations, and not their negation as it is to-day. The social order, the religious system, and the political state must become embodiments of our national Dharma and Wisdom and cease to be engines of exploitation and injustice, citadels of selfishness, oppression and superstition as they are to-day. We require no more illumination ; we need no new truth. We have only to live in the light which has been shed around us, and build on the truths which have been disclosed to us by our Saviours. Till now we have preferred to live in the

darkness of caste-prisons and build on the falsehoods of priestcraft, and so long as we do not abandon our allegiance to these we but deserve to remain in chains. A life based on human brotherhood and the recognition of the fatherhood of God, Brahma, or Allah and seeking its highest fulfilment here in this world, in our individual and national life is the true religion, the only religion which can save mankind. This is the essence of the Hindu Nationalism of Sree Narayana Guru, the path to unity, freedom and peace. The Buddha made us one in Righteousness ; Sree Sankara made us one in the spirit and Truth ; Sree Narayana Guru seeks to make us one in the living brotherhood of a free nation.

The institutions and forces which the Guru have left behind are so numerous, scattered and various in character, that they hardly possess any common shape and seem to move towards no definite goal in their present condition. It is too early to say whether they will or will not assume an organic form and institutional individuality of their own. In their present apparently chaotic condition they have been saved from degenerating into a well-marked sect or creed. The Guru and his teachings have not come to be claimed as the sole monopoly of an organised group. No single body has yet been developed to hold the heart ; no temple has yet been built to enshrine the soul. The spirit of the Guru is working in diverse ways and forms, in places far and near, through persons and organisations, seemingly unconnected, but all aspiring to the same glorious end, the breaking down of the barriers to human fellowship and the realisation of a greater freedom

and truth in life and knowledge. To Hindu society this may prove a great blessing. Unlike other movements which have become separate sects more or less outside the pale of Hinduism and thus lost their capacity to influence Hindu life, the Guru's mission continues to be a dynamic power within it. It stands out as an expression and exposition of Hindu Nationalism, bolder than many hitherto attempted but in full harmony with its previous manifestations from the days of the Upanishads through the Buddha and Sree Sankara down to Dayananda Saraswati.

CHAPTER XXIII

SOME PITFALLS OF INDIAN NATIONALISM

REMEDY—A HINDU CONGRESS

By the Indian national movement we mean the political movement started and led by the Indian National Congress for the freedom of India. Its spirit and scope are determined by the constitution and accepted official policy of the Congress, and not by the teachings and activities of Mahatma Gandhi who has attempted with considerable success to supply the deficiencies of the original Congress scheme and supplement it with some new organisations for constructive work. But we cannot say that the Congress itself has been saved from the inevitable perils of its inevitable constitution. In the first place there are many aspects of the problem of national regeneration which are not touched by the Congress or Mahatma Gandhi, and which the people themselves have to tackle if the country is to

obtain its true freedom. In the second place even those constructive efforts initiated by Mahatmaji have not become a vital part of the national programme in popular psychology. Therefore, it is very likely that when Mahatmaji's personal guidance is lost to the Congress—God grant that it may continue for many years more—the Congress and the people will relapse into the more convenient narrow groove of the strictly Congress policy and lose the benefit of the progress that has been already made under Mahatmaji's leadership. This will mean an indefinite prolonging of the period of agony and struggle. It is therefore necessary to consider the Congress by itself, apart from Mahatmaji, in order to detect its deficiencies. Mahatmaji's work and teachings stand as a distinct contribution of that saint. The nation has not yet proved its worth to claim credit for most of the things that its leader is doing. Let us examine ourselves and see where we stand without him, and then only we shall be able to put our finger on the weak points of our system. Some of the drawbacks we have ventured to point out are inevitable under the peculiar circumstances in which we are working at present and are mentioned only to emphasise the need for devising a remedy, and not in a spirit of condemnation.

The Congress is committed to a purely political programme, strictly eschewing social and religious matters, and this is necessary as a practical measure, though unsupportable on principle. Our life, individual as well as collective, is one homogeneous and organic whole and cannot be cut up into watertight compartments, such as politics, religion and society.

As the late Ranade put it so eloquently "The liberation that has to be sought is not in one department of life, or one set of activity, or in one sphere of thought, but it is an all-round work in which you cannot dissociate one activity from another. You cannot have a good social system when you find yourself low in the scale of political rights, nor can you be fit to exercise political rights and privileges unless your social system is based on reason and justice. You cannot have a good economic system when your social arrangements are imperfect. If your religious ideals are low and grovelling, you cannot succeed in social, economical or political spheres. This interdependence is not an accident but is the law of our nature. It is a mistaken view which divorces considerations political from those social and economical, and no man can be said to realise his duty in one aspect who neglects his duties in the other directions."

We would go a step further and say that the very idea of separate compartments is erroneous and harmful. There is really only one big problem, so clearly interconnected and interdependent in all its aspects, that to treat one part of it as materially different from another would be a fundamental mistake. To the nationalist who wants to see the country free and united, there are no distinct things like religion and politics, but they are included in the one question of organising the national life for its supreme fulfilment. Religion no less than politics has to justify itself by its helpfulness in achieving this aim. Social institutions have a value or significance only to the extent that they serve to promote national welfare. A truly national state or government

cannot shirk responsibility in any of these spheres of life and must be able to exercise its power for the common good as much in so-called religious matters as in political affairs. The reason for excluding social problems from the Congress platform is one of mere expediency or practical politics. The president-elect of the Congress in his message to the Social Conference of 1895 wrote thus: "The *raison d'etre* for excluding social questions from our deliberations is that if we were to take up such questions, it may lead to serious differences ultimately culminating in a schism, and it is a matter of the first importance to prevent a split." While the Congress is thus justified in its attitude, it at the same time confesses the dangerous potentialities of our social life, and its incapacity for the time, at any rate, to do anything to improve the situation. For the Hindus this is a very serious affair for various reasons.

The most potent evil of our past which ultimately led to the downfall of the Hindus and the loss of the country's freedom, was the estrangement of society from the state, the creation of two independent governing entities or souls within the same body of the people. A distinguished Indian historian of the present generation writes: "The fact is, India presents the rare and remarkable phenomenon of the state and society co-existing apart from, and in some degree of independence of each other as independent centres of national popular and collective life and activity." It was not only a rare and remarkable phenomenon but also a disastrous one in the evolution of the nation's life. The Aryan invaders for some time kept

themselves aloof from the mass of the people as a superior race, and later on the priests succeeded in putting a stop to intermingling by their caste rules. The Brahmanical regulations condemned the large body of the early inhabitants of India to complete exclusion from the civilisation of the rulers. The state, then, recognised no duty to its Indian subjects. At a later stage, when the priestly and the warrior classes established themselves as two rival powers as Brahmans and Kshatriyas, the Kshatriya ruler was not to interfere with social and religious matters except on the advice of the Brahmans. The Brahmans represented the highest social and religious authority, the *de facto* rulers. The Kshatriya state was only a military power subordinate to the Brahman, and its function was confined to conquering expeditions and amassing wealth to be shared between the priests and the warriors. The separation of the Kshatriya state from the society was thus an essential element of the scheme of Brahmanical domination. Later still, when the Muhammadans and the English became rulers, as foreigners in culture and religion, they kept aloof from the communal life of the Hindus who were left to take care of themselves, as best as they could, under Brahman leadership. In this way for many centuries now, the Hindus have been subject to two imperialisms—the imperialism of the foreign ruler represented by the state and the imperialism of the priest represented by the society. As Sir R. G. Bhandarkar said: "We have been subject to a threefold tyranny; political tyranny, priestly tyranny and social tyranny or the tyranny of caste. (The last two are really one.) Crushed by this no man has dared to stand up and assert himself.

Even religious reformers have shunned the legitimate consequences of their doctrines to avoid coming into conflict with the established order of things. . . . At present, however, though we live under a foreign Government, we enjoy a freedom of thought and action, such as we never enjoyed before under our own Hindu princes. But have we shown a capacity to shake ourselves free from priestly and social tyranny? I am afraid not much." This then is the secret of the punctilious separation of politics from social matters observed by the Congress. Like former Hindu reformers and teachers who preached liberal ideals but were afraid to touch the existing order of things, the great Congress also, for fear of antagonising powerful vested interests, has preferred to circumvent the danger by chalking out an exclusively political path of its own. The results have not been all for the good.

(*a*) The Congress is becoming a body of professional politicians or agitators or fighters, a new race of Kshatriyas who are willing to submit to the Brahmanical order with a view to facilitate a speedy victory over the foreign rulers. Just as the ancient Kshatriyas, the Rajputs and the Mahrattas were made use of to oppose successive invaders in the name of religion and the nation, so the Congress is now leading a struggle as an army of politicians with little inclination or power to concern itself with the social life of the people. As has repeatedly happened in the past, when the victory is won, real power instead of passing to the Congress Kshatriyas, will continue in the hands of the native imperialists.

(*b*) True Indian Nationalism is not a new thing nor can it be purely political in the restricted sense.

From time immemorial—as we have shown in previous chapters—Hindu Nationalism has stood for certain fundamental rights and truths, and its struggles were invariably characterised in all stages, century after century, by a passionate opposition to caste and priestcraft and an earnest yearning to assimilate other peoples and cultures. It is admitted that Indian Nationalism has its root in Hindu Nationalism. If that is so, by divorcing politics from social matters, Indian Nationalism has abandoned Hindu Nationalism and thus cut its own root. The continuity of the national movement is lost, its positive significance to the Hindus is considerably reduced, its link with the past and the present actualities of Hindu life is broken; its vital contact with its own followers is made extremely flimsy. Nationalism is made to hang on the thin shred of opposition to the foreign rulers.

(*c*) Just as the policy of non-interference followed by the British with regard to the social and religious life of the people has contributed to strengthen and perpetuate all the ills and vices of society, the Congress policy certainly tends to give another lease of life to the social evils which are sucking the nation's blood every moment. Silence is taken as approbation by the people. When the Congress refuses to put its hand to the work of social and religious emancipation, nay piously keeps aloof from all such activities by prohibiting the use of its pavilion for social conferences, it is by that very act, throwing cold water on Hindu liberalism and strengthening the forces of orthodoxy. In fact the Congress policy has created an impression that national regeneration has nothing to do with society

and religion which may be left to their fate, good or bad. It has killed the spirit of Hindu Protestantism and strengthened the orthodox forces. While all the good Hindu workers have been drawn into the Congress circle and their services thus lost to the social movements, the rich and the orthodox Hindus have set up their organisations to thwart the national aspirations. These anti-national, exploiting, imperialistic Hindu associations are now standing out as representatives of Hindu society and religion; the Congress does not dare to speak for the Hindus, and the Hindu proletariat have no means of ventilating their grievances and yearnings. The Congress has thus crushed, in effect, its allies, the social reformers, and left the field entirely to its enemies, the orthodox Hindu Party.

(*d*) After all, the Government of independent India has to be carried on by the people and not by a few saintly leaders. One great object of all political agitation should be to train the people to organise themselves, fight for and preserve their rights when they are gained in a truly democratic spirit. As president of the Congress the Hon. Mr. Sinha said: "It is the people whom we want to be capable of self-government, not merely Indians like ourselves, but the people in the villages who toil with the sweat of their brow . . . . You have got to work day and night, patiently and strenuously, if you desire to achieve the object which you profess—Government of the people for the people and by the people." The educative value of a political movement is considerably lost when it is reduced to a mere struggle with the rulers. The real fight is with ourselves, with the disintegrating tendencies in our own social organism

and not with the foreigners. Nations are themselves responsible for their fate. The people of modern India have to thank themselves if they have allowed their freedom to be destroyed, first by their priestly masters and then by foreign adventurers. Unless we drive this truth home to the people and enable them to stand on their own legs, to resist exploitations of every kind, to assert their manliness in all spheres of life, in fact to make them a nation of free men, political independence will be hardly worth fighting for. When the masses are left to be sat upon, ridden upon and spat upon by their own leaders, they are not likely to prove worthy of holding the reins of administration when the victory is won. Indian Nationalism loses its value as a popular, educative, regenerative and democratic self-expansion when its operation is restricted to politics. Much of the good influence exerted by the Congress is destroyed by the overwhelming counter forces under which the people are daily labouring. The high hopes and righteous fervour created by Mahatmaji in the popular mind have been all but lost because there was no organisation spread among the masses to divert their enthusiasm to practical reform and reconstruction of life. Mahatmaji roused them from their age-long lethargy, infused a new courage into their hearts and they were ready to take marching orders, but there was no one to give the order. There was no competent agency to utilise the national awakening to any permanent benefit and the people fell back into their traditional indifference and submission to evils. Unless the progress that is made in the political sphere is consolidated by corresponding improvement in social conditions,

the energy and resources of the political organisation will be spent in repeated attempts to overcome the same evil, in going over the same ground again and again. The Hindu-Muslim, the Harijan, the Brahman—Non-Brahman, Temple entry and similar problems are all old ones, and we are no nearer their solution than when the political work was started. At every crisis they crop up with deadly effect and thwart further progress. A more sustained endeavour to arrive at durable settlements in these directions has to be made by the Hindu community. Unless the people are habituated by the discipline and ideals of daily life to exercise their independence and cherish democratic principles, there will always be the danger that the victory over one foe may turn out to be the defeat by another. It has happened in the past, and the same old causes are operating now in the same way. It may happen again if we are not sufficiently on our guard. The national life should be purified and strengthened and consolidated for permanent existence and progress much more than for a temporary success over a present enemy. Unless we set our home in order, freedom gained somehow will only open the door for another conqueror with greater appetite for exploitation, or power will pass, instead of to the people, to the exploiters of the people within the country.

(e) Political agitation cannot always provide work for the thousands of young men and women who have responded to the call of the country and probably abandoned their ordinary pursuits to join the army of martyrs. There are many more such who are keeping back because there is nothing to be done. If useful avenues of service

are not opened for them all over the country and in varied directions they will naturally get disheartened, take to undesirable ways and instead of proving a help to the national cause will endanger it. A wider field of constructive service has to be provided, and opportunity afforded to local talent and enterprise to initiate and carry out nation-building activities subject to a general programme and policy. In a Congress camp every soldier can wait for the orders of the commanding officer as in an army in the battlefield. There is no need for originality. The whole nation cannot be converted into a military camp for any length of time. When the pressure of immediate danger is removed, most of the fighters disperse to their villages, where there is no demand for their service. There is urgent need no doubt, but no intelligent demand or reliable co-operation. Capacities and methods are bound to vary with different workers and in different localities. We cannot expect that all will yoke their natural capacities to one or two items of national work, such as Khaddar and Harijan uplift. A more comprehensive programme of social activity has become a crying need. The national spirit is seeking expression in hundreds of directions. It cannot be kept within the confines of a strictly military programme such as that of the Congress. Local leadership and originality have to be encouraged and linked on to an all-round scheme of national reconstruction, if the goal of freedom is to be attained expeditiously. There is an atmosphere of artificiality and dictatorship around the present arrangement which may prove advantageous to a general organising his forces, but will fail to satisfy a whole nation of

peaceful workers. There is lack of work ; vital needs are neglected ; there is a growth in the number of ideal agitators ; local initiative and leadership are suppressed.

(f) It is highly necessary to ensure a uniformity of national policy among the individuals and institutions working in varied spheres, all desiring to serve the country in one form or other. Such uniformity can be made possible only by the enunciation of common ideals and principles of social and religious life and the popularisation of an agreed programme for the attainment of the goal. At present too much emphasis is being placed on restricting the bare processes and paths of activity, on concentrating the forces on a few fronts. A few can keep on sharpening their swords, but a large number must attend to the ploughs and the domestic hearths. There are many lakhs of people who are not directly connected with the Congress, but who would be willing to do their little bit in a less ostentatious manner, even as officers of the government, to promote unity, reform abuses, strengthen public spirit and help useful enterprises. In the absence of opportunity to share in non-political work, their services and support are being lost to the national cause. For lack of sufficient discussion and clear enunciation of governing social ideals, workers in different fields are pulling in opposite directions and cancelling each other's efforts. Educationists have their distinctive fads ; religious men pursue their exclusive methods ; socialists cling to their panacea. Aryasamaj, Brahmosamaj, Ramakrishna Mission, Sikh Organisations, the Jat-Pat Torak Mandal, Service Societies, Harijan Associations, Non-Brahman Societies, Sree Narayana

Mission and a thousand other institutions and organisations all devoted to the same great purpose of Hindu unification and freedom, are working in all parts of the country, very often pursuing antagonistic policies and not infrequently creating avoidable conflicts. Their labours are made difficult and sometimes frustrated. There is no co-operation among them. Hindu society is being pecked and pulled by each as it pleases. The waste of national energy is immense. To co-ordinate these forces and harness them to a well conceived common good of the Hindus, we want a representative Hindu organisation which will be able to formulate the essential Hindu demands and serve as a common platform for all liberal minded Hindu workers who are unable to join the political struggle.

(g) Permanent Hindu-Muslim unity can be achieved only through cultural rapprochement and increasing social affinity. Political compromises and settlements are bound to be temporary and will be upset the moment they are found inconvenient to any party. There is also the further danger that basic principles of democracy may be sacrificed or the interests of one party or the other may be betrayed in the anxiety to patch up quarrels somehow and present a united front to the enemy. The interests of the Hindu masses are in greater danger of being ignored for default of proper representation than those of any other important group. The Muslims can assert themselves, the orthodox Hindus are vociferous, the Hindu politicians are strongly organised. The Hindu masses are still without any means of voicing their demands as Hindus. In the long run half-hearted compromises with rival groups

create more trouble than do good. In the days of Akbar, Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya, Tukaram and Ekanath and even of Shivaji there seemed to be greater fellow feeling and desire for fraternisation between Hindus and Muhammadans than after the national spirit manifested itself. In some places the national movement has undoubtedly contributed to widen the gulf between them. Politics is identified with a scramble for power by the average politicians and common citizens, however a few saintly leaders may protest. On this basis there can be no durable agreement between widely different cultural and religious groups. Material considerations serve more to rouse rivalries and suspicions than to cement real friendship even within a family circle. Many millions of people can never be made to agree on a calculation of risks and profits, on a perfect balancing of separate and selfish interests. But on a common platform of social and religious ideals it will be possible to establish permanent attachments, new contacts and closer affinities without selfish motives, and they will automatically pave the way for their expression in a political unity. This is true of our relations with the Christian and other religious groups. Opportunities for social intermingling have to be increased; a wider spirit of tolerance has to be infused into the daily life; feelings of antagonism have to be removed by abolishing the causes of irritation; unity has to be created by exposing essential identities in the natural and spiritual aspirations of all humanity and cultivating devotion to common ideals, more in the social sphere than in the restricted political one. In the absence of popular effort in these directions,

the various communities which compose the Indian population are going on—deepening mutual prejudices, developing points of difference, and cultivating rivalries. The Hindus, constituting the majority party, have to set the lead in creating a common, social and cultural ground where all communities may meet in a friendly spirit without selfish motives.

(*h*) After all, politics is but a means. The social ideals are the end. The political and economic strength of people must be constantly controlled by the vision of the ultimate aims of the national life. Political freedom would be worth little if it did not satisfy the universal desire of all humanity for opportunities of fuller self-realisation in social existence. The attainment of a completely democratic society depends on the adherence of the masses to liberal social ideals. No one achievement is going to solve all problems. One success will only lead to another struggle for a further success. Struggles, successes and failures form an eternal series and their connecting link is the social and religious idealism of daily life. It is, therefore, necessary to hold out constantly before the Hindu masses a sufficiently comprehensive and high social goal which will inspire their local as well as their national activities and direct them in all their repeated efforts along different paths to the same great destiny. The absence of a representative Hindu organisation to formulate those ideal ends, popularise them, and promote sustained endeavour for their realisation, cannot but be detrimental to the advancement of the whole nation in all spheres.

(*i*) The Hindus cannot afford to ignore the

world forces. The world has been moving and is moving in certain clearly indicated directions in politics, and we are trying to move with the world, to apply the principles of world growth and use its methods. We want freedom, democracy and socialism and such other good things which other nations seem to have attained. We do not care to examine why they have succeeded and why we have not. The nationalities of the West are the result of two great natural impulses of all civilised races—the great impulse towards individual liberty and equality which is otherwise called democracy and the equally mighty impulse towards a closer union with their fellow-men which we call nationality. The latter presupposes the former. There cannot be a nation of masters and servants, of high castes and low castes, of free men and slaves. Free and self-respecting citizens can alone make a free nation. A democratic social order is an imperative condition precedent to national solidarity. The Hindu social system is undemocratic, anti-national, imperialistic. In European countries the national awakening was preceded by a revolt against priestly domination. A people who are every day of their life stooping at the feet of priests and entrusting their souls to the care of unscrupulous pretenders cannot constitute a self-sustaining nationality. Our ability to throw off the yoke of priestly thraldom is the test of our competence for national independence. It was so in other parts of the world and we are not going to prove an exception. Tribalism or communalism is incompatible with nationalism. The former is the pride of exclusive caste groups or racial groups, and the latter is the spirit of patriotic devotion to the country

and to the welfare of all within the country as fellow patriots. So long as we cling to the ancient tribal or caste attachments the truly national attitude will be denied to us, will be impossible of attainment. We must give up the former if we want to obtain the latter. The progress of democracy has been marked by the extension of state control to all main departments of social life and national activity. We cannot tolerate two governments, one political and the other religious, if we want to attain national unity. No people can serve two masters at the same time. We have to choose between the two—whether to be a nation of patriots or a collection of mutually jealous castes and creeds. The world is becoming more and more one ; no people can afford to stand out of it and say they will have their own illogical ways. Our peace, as well as the peace of the world, imperatively demands that our life should be linked on with that of other nations, that our culture should be approximated to the best common ideals of all humanity. To-day the Hindus stand out of the current of world progress. Other nations can feel no fellowship with a people to whom suicidal caste distinctions and soulless idolatry are the essence of civilisation. We have to tune our national life in harmony with the song of world progress if we want to march with other countries to the victory which is peace and happiness for all. Hindus have first to become a free nation before India can become one. There can be no independent India with a servile Hindu population.

(*j*) To complete the list of our perversions, there is rising in the country a Hindu Nationalism which is a travesty of all true progress. This creed

is being fostered by distinguished scholars and propagated both within and without the country with pride and a religious fervour. It is marked by such claims as these: the Hindu civilisation is the best in the world, Hindu religion is the highest glory of man, Hindu institutions are the models of righteousness, Hindu Nationalism is peculiarly its own and unlike those of other nations. The parading of these stupendous claims and exhibition of self-esteem is only a prelude to a justification of all the evils and wickednesses of caste and priestcraft as the unique contributions of Hindu culture. The Western classes are compared to the Eastern castes; the racial persecutions in America and Africa and Germany are quoted in support of Hindu untouchability; the alleged failure of democracy in the West is used as an argument to laugh at talk of freedom and equality in India; the silly stories of the Puranas are used to prove the superiority of Hindu intellect and science to those of the West and discredit the claims of scientific advancement made by modern civilisation in general; in fact all that we have and are is held up for the highest esteem and all that others are and have is cried down as worthless trash. From these self-laudatory conclusions, the new Hindu nationalist jumps at once to the stern demand that Indian Nationalism must be for the preservation of the immortal culture of the Hindus. Every province and every village rings with claims of distinct culture, distinct contributions it can make to the complex picture of Indian life. In short, glorification and perpetuation of the social and religious status quo is the sum and substance of this much lauded spirit. Unless the Hindu proletariat

are organised and enabled to speak for themselves and to shape their own ideals, there is a great danger of educated orthodoxy rising on the tide of the national awakening and re-establishing its vested interests and hereditary domination. We are asking Great Britain to announce unequivocally what she is fighting for and to proclaim her attitude towards India's claims. The Hindus have a similar right to ask the Nationalists to state in unambiguous terms what they mean by culture, democracy and freedom; whether they are identical with all the glorious Hindu institutions we possess now or whether they promise anything better, and if so, what is the exact nature of the other thing they promise. Similarly the world has a right to ask India to announce her intentions and ideals with regard to the introduction of democratic institutions, the advancement of science and knowledge, individual freedom and equality of citizenship both before the law of man and that of God. Hindu Nationalists, Indian Nationalists, Muhammadans, Christians and Sikhs, Brahmans and Non-Brahmans, Asiatics and Europeans are vitally interested in the supreme question what Indian Nationalism stands for. Will it preserve the castes? Will it support priestly exploitation? Will it cling to its self-conceited exclusion from world progress? Or will it join the other civilised nations in their sorrows and comforts, successes and failures, trials and triumphs as brother with brother, as fellow pilgrims groping their way to the kingdom of God on earth? A representative Hindu Congress alone can give an authoritative answer to these questions. India and the world demand that the Hindu democrats should organise,

speak out and assert themselves. If we may be allowed to anticipate the aims of a truly democratic Hindu Congress, we would say that they will be:

I. To make the Hindus a free and united nation living in harmony with other nations,

(*a*) By obtaining for all Hindus that degree of freedom and equality in Hindu society which Buddhists, Muhammadans and Christians enjoy in their respective societies,

(*b*) By obtaining for all Hindus that equality before social and religious law which, as Indians, they claim before the state law,

(*c*) By obtaining for Hindus such right to manage Hindu institutions and affairs as they claim as Indians to govern India,

(*d*) By obtaining for Hindus the same right to admit fresh members to its fold as the Buddhists and Muhammadans and Christians enjoy.

II. To reconstruct Hindu life and institutions so as to make them harmonise with the political ideals of India.

III. To co-operate with other Hindu and non-Hindu organisations for the realisation of Indian Nationality and Human Brotherhood.

Chapter XXIV

SWARAJ—HOW?

In the previous chapters we have shown, beyond the possibility of any doubt that India lost her freedom because of the weakness of the Hindus, that that weakness lay in the intrinsic defects and unrighteousness of their socio-religious organisation,

that Hindu life continues even now to harbour within its bosom all the evils which brought about the downfall, that there are many millions of Hindus themselves who are justly and honestly opposed to the revival of Hindu power without abolishing the ancient injustices, that in the present condition of Hindu society, it cannot expect hearty co-operation from any other self-respecting community, and that the obstacles to co-operation will disappear when the Hindu socio-religious system is made tolerable to civilisation and democracy. On the strength of the above conclusions, we presume that without Hindu unity there can be no Hindu-Muslim unity, and without Hindu-Muslim unity there can be no Swaraj in India, or reversing the argument, if there is Hindu unity, Hindu-Muslim unity would become practicable and with Hindu-Muslim unity no one can deny India her right to Swaraj. The divine purpose running through all the conflicts, conquests and terrible sufferings as well as the phenomenal rise and fall of cultures and religions, and the co-mingling of diverse civilising influences which have marked the course of Indian history, has been the emancipation and unification of the vast and varied types of humanity that inhabit this continent. Hindu culture has ceased to further the divine plan, and is to-day defying all the forces of Hindu liberation, thus preventing the realisation of Indian unity and independence. A radical change of the scheme and policy of Hindu life in consonance with the highest teachings of its own prophets will alone open the avenues of progress which now remain blocked and barred.

We also believe that the political power we have

now, though extremely insufficient in itself, can be successfully utilised for the consolidation of the Hindus, and more power would automatically flow into our hands as we succeed, nay in strict proportion to our success, in this work of Hindu unification. So far we have not used, nor seriously attempted to use, nor given a reliable assurance that we would use political power in the interests of a substantial democratisation of Hindu life. On the other hand our exercise of authority has increased the suspicion of the liberal Hindus that Hindu unity will not be attained within a conceivable period of time, and enhanced the fear of the Muhammadans that the talk of Hindu-Muslim unity is but a lip homage to an impossible proposal made for temporary political advantages.

We firmly believe that when we have achieved a reasonable measure of national unity, not by diplomacy and compromises only, but on the basis of broad principles of human liberty and equality it will be impossible for Britain to stand between India and independence.

If the above presumptions are fairly correct, then there should be a suspension of the struggle for more power, provided we can expect reasonable co-operation from the British Government in the carrying out of a programme of the nationalisation of Indian life. The sufferings caused by Imperialism are but a fit punishment for our past sins, and probably also a much needed impulse to make us move forward, and we should endure them for some years more in the spirit of national self-sacrifice. They should serve to call forth the mighty enthusiasm, selfless devotion to the commonweal and righteous

courage of conviction without which so great a task cannot be accomplished. We must make a determined effort to cleanse the Augean stable of caste imperialism and prepare ourselves to wield the national power which would inevitably be ours or fight for it if it is denied to us. Let us hope that by the time we were able to stand on our own legs as a united nation, say within 20 or 30 years, the problem of Indo-British co-operation will have been solved and our relations with Britain placed on a footing of enduring comradeship for the good of both the countries and of the world at large.

Hindu Unity

The following are the chief measures which we think would serve to consolidate the Hindus and make Hindu society agreeable to all enlightened Hindus themselves, acceptable to the modern world, and consistent with the notions of political independence.

(1) Hindu religious and charitable institutions are now being conducted for private profit and in a manner detrimental to the growth of the national spirit. They do not minister to the moral and spiritual needs of the community. Their management should be placed in the hands of Hindu organisations recognised and controlled by the Government.

(2) A Central Hindu Committee should be established with full powers to assume the management of all temples and other Hindu institutions of a public character and work them for the common good of all Hindus without any distinction of caste.

(3) Schools should be established by the Committee for the training of competent Hindu

missionaries and priests. Every temple and other Hindu institution should be placed in the charge of trained missionaries. Attached to each of these, there should be a local association of all Hindus which will be the unit of the Hindu confederation.

(4) An All-India Hindu Congress shall be established which shall be in due course the final authority for all affairs concerning the Hindus, subject to the ultimate control of the State.

(5) One or more systems or codes of Hindu Law of Marriage, succession and inheritance based entirely on economic considerations and principles of human liberty and equity, should be promulgated, recognising the right of every Hindu to marry and dine, and inherit and transfer property without any reference to caste.

(6) Then should follow a Proclamation of Hindu Emancipation as was done in Japan, freeing the Hindus from all the restraints of caste and abolishing all recognition of caste in State proceedings and records.

Hindu-Muslim Unity

The following steps are suggested for the removal of Hindu-Muslim frictions and the establishment of cordial relations with all non-Hindu communities.

(1) A declaration of the absolute freedom of all individuals to give up or adopt any religious faith without involving the loss of domestic rights.

(2) A declaration of the absolute freedom of private worship.

(3) Public worship of all sorts to be strictly confined to buildings and premises licensed by the Government and no religious function to be allowed outside such premises.

(4) Religion should be taught as an optional subject in all schools. Scientific and comparative study of religions should be encouraged.

(5) Religion should be deprived of all sorts of economic, social or political significance or value by gradual steps, mutually agreed upon, extending over a period of 20 or 30 years so that after that period it shall cease to be a consideration in politics and administration. In the meanwhile, important posts under the Government throughout the country should be distributed among the Hindus, Muhammadans and Christians in the proportion of their All-India population.

Of the above proposals, those relating to Hindu-unity are based on elementary principles and rights recognised in all democratic countries and should present no insurmountable difficulty. Muslim co-operation may not be forthcoming all at once. If the Hindus are able to show a real change of heart and a reasonably united front, its effect will be so profound that Muhammadans will not care to be obstinate, and world opinion itself will so much strengthen the Hindu hands that all unreasonable oppositions to Indian freedom will prove ineffective. In fact everything depends on Hindu unity. Nationalise Hindu life, and India will be a Nation; emancipate the Hindus, and India will be free.

CHAPTER XXV

NO FREEDOM WITH CASTE

These are critical times no less for India than for the rest of the world. The fate of many future centuries may be influenced by the attitude we take at the present juncture. All peaceful progress depends very much on the ability of the people to stand out boldly for correct ideals. It is the duty of the intellectuals and the leaders of society to formulate the ideals unequivocally and popularise them among their followers, so that they may give their support, at the proper time, to constitutional measures intended to safeguard their rights. Every Indian should ask himself what he is fighting for and arrive at a clear conception of the rights he wants to acquire, not only for the nation as a whole, but also in an equal measure for the individuals who constitute the nation.

The present struggle in India between the rulers and the ruled derives its strongest support from the economic sufferings of the country which have hit the educated classes more than the others. India is being fleeced for the profit of people in other countries; her life-blood is being drained; as we look on the country is steadily heading towards a catastrophe; its vitality is sinking lower and lower. Just a few educated people who have made a study of the problem realise the gravity of the danger. The problem is so subtle that a large majority of the English educated youths themselves have hardly any correct notion of the many ways in which the people are being economically crushed. The masses cannot understand the situation, even if an expert

explains the facts to them for days together. But the effects of the economic exploitation are being increasingly felt by all ; the discontent and sufferings are on the increase, the uncertainty of livelihood is becoming a nightmare to most people. Only their traditional capacity to live on the lowest scale, to be satisfied with the barest minimum that will keep body and soul together, has enabled them to endure this process of exhaustion so long. The political struggle for India's freedom is being dominated by the economic motive. The politically-conscious people are the worst sufferers and feel the pinch of poverty more than others. Many of the political malcontents have no other motive than improvement of the economic condition. They believe that Swaraj will give better opportunities to earn wealth and lead a decent life. They are no doubt right in their own way. Some of them have begun to proclaim it as a political gospel that the economic prosperity of the people is the whole and only aim of all politics and government. They reduce life to an economic problem and hope to solve that problem, and other problems if any, by economic legislation and economic planning. They say there is only one disease in India and in the world at large—the disease of capitalism or economic exploitation of individuals by other individuals and nations by other nations. Very often these enthusiasts go under the name of "Socialists."

But many Indian Socialists appear to be as fanatical and unpractical as Hindu Vedantins. They talk big things which humanity cannot hope to realise under any conceivable circumstances. A theoretical or philosophical possibility is not always a safe guide

to go by in practical affairs. Hindu Vedantins are never tired of preaching about the unique greatness of Hindu philosophy and religion and culture. They grow eloquent and proclaim from the house-tops that Vedanta alone can save the world and civilisation. Whatever be its metaphysical value, we know as a grim truth of past history and present reality that it has not saved India, it has not saved the Hindus. It has not during any known period of history prevented the Hindus from committing the sins, horrors, and oppressions which other people in similar circumstances have committed in other parts of the world. It has not helped the Hindus, generally speaking, to develop in actual social existence any higher standard of happiness and freedom than other nations. In modern times, the Hindus have not exhibited any extraordinary capacity to cultivate in actual practice virtues and ideals superior to those of other peoples. On the other hand, they have in some vital directions ignominiously failed to move with the time-spirit, to prove themselves true to their own professed culture or to the aspirations of modern civilisation. No other people have shown greater tenacity in clinging to ancient abominations than the Hindus. No other people deny justice and humanity to their own kith and kin, their own co-religionists and compatriots, without rhyme or reason as the Hindus do even to-day. No doubt there is the excuse that India was in chains and could not shape her own destiny. There is much truth in it; but there is also the other side of the truth, that India was in chains because of her vices and sins.

Socialism if worked in its true spirit, not only

in the economic field but in all spheres of life, in the spirit of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Man as Tolstoy, the father of Socialism in Russia so passionately preached, would, no doubt, go a long way to give us peace and prosperity. But the purely economic Socialism which some of our countrymen seem to dream of, is no more going to be a panacea than any of the panaceas advertised by quacks. True Socialism is a culture, a religion. It cannot be attained by mere external adjustments alone. It is a faith to be propagated and cultivated until people are able to appreciate it and cling to it as they cling to their religion. It is a scheme and philosophy of life, mental, moral and intellectual, no less than economic, social and political. It involves a revolutionary change of our entire conception of the life of the individual as well as of society. Its success ultimately depends on the moral conversion of the people to its doctrines. We are not here concerned with the question whether the conversion is to come first, or whether it may be left to follow as a result of the actual experience of the benefits of enforced Socialism. Theoretically it may be either way. But we believe that in a country steeped in a hoary culture and enslaved by immemorial traditions, customs and institutions which are a negation of even the elementary notions of Socialism, nay of human freedom and dignity itself, we require a good deal of mental preparation and preliminary training before the people can be trusted to be true to the ideals which their leaders propound.

The leaders themselves cannot expect their followers to take them at their word. India has seen more saints and reformers and teachers than

any other country ; India has a more magnificent heritage of noble sentiments and speculations than other nations. These have not saved her. The Hindu peoples led by the nose by their native exploiters and priests have preferred the path of national suicide in spite of their teachers and teachings. The Socialists and leaders of to-day who talk noble sentiments without taking the responsibility to educate the people to adjust their lives to the new ideas, or without doing what can be reasonably done here and now for removing the worst anomalies of the country's life, will prove no exception to the old rule. Their assurances will avail nothing so long as the Hindu masses, nay the classes, more than the masses, are steeped in the culture of caste and the religion of deception and exploitation. Even our foremost Socialists have not had the courage to tell the people that these abominations must go if they should have true freedom. On the other hand many of them even think and assure us that Socialism has nothing to do with Hindu customs and beliefs, which will remain intact even after Swaraj. Others are inventing new ways and justifications to preserve these diabolical distinctions and insults in the name of the sanctity of religion, division of labour, economic planning, value of heredity in economics, and other shibboleths of capitalistic philosophy and yet holding themselves out as Socialists and Nationalists.

There is another set of distinguished Nationalists to whom "our unique culture" is everything—the unique culture of Bengal, the Punjab, the Maharashtra, the Andhras, the Tamils, the Kerala and so forth. God alone knows wherein lies the uniqueness and glory except it be in the castes and their disastrous

ramifications. In the ultimate analysis, this separate culture will be found to consist of exclusiveness in marriage, in eating and drinking, in the superstitions and customs, which divide one people from another and help them to organise distinct groups for mutual exploitation at the sacrifice of national unity and freedom. The country may well cry: Save us from Nationalism if its aim is to give a new lease of life to the culture which is steadily suffocating us and trampling under foot all our natural aspirations for a manly existence. When we scrutinise the situation carefully, a good number of our Socialists and Nationalists will turn out to be rank Capitalists and fanatical Communalists. They cannot be otherwise, born and brought up as they are in the atmosphere of Hindu Imperialism, inured to the slavery of caste and the untruths of priestcraft.

Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal are taking too much for granted if they believe that the country will be non-violent, will liberate the Harijans, recognise the equality of man by birth, stop the cut-throat economic exploitation, and establish comradeship with other religions and nations in the interests of humanity when it gets Swaraj. Little has been done to educate the people to these ends. Taking into consideration the extraordinary faith of the people in Mahatma Gandhi and the critical times in which we are living and which ought to call forth our willing sacrifices, it cannot be said that his appeal for Harijan emancipation, opening of the temples, Hindu-Muslim unity, adoption of Khaddar and spinning and Hindi, has met with a satisfactory response from the people. There was some effervescent enthusiasm when the

fate of the country seemed to hang in the balance. There was a temporary response by a small minority when great hopes were in the air and large sums were available for propaganda. The constructive nation-building programmes have made only very slight progress. The weakest point of our national life is seen in the tragic failure of the various attempts so far made for Hindu unity.

An urgent need of the day is to get rid of the notion that we are a unique people, a peculiar type of humanity distinct from the rest of mankind. The German philosophers propounded a similar philosophy regarding the German people. Herr Hitler is devastating Europe because he feels that he is a divinely ordained person with a mission to lead the unique German race to world domination. Just as Hitler stops at nothing, does not hesitate to adopt the most brutal methods to achieve his objects, people who think their so-called culture to be unique will, when they get power, use all means to preserve and propagate the injustices and atrocities which are masqueraded in the name of that culture. Give the Hindus independence and the necessary power, they will be as violent as imperialistic, and as aggressive as other people, and in addition will do their utmost to propagate their caste culture and priestcraft, as "the unique Hindu civilisation." All the arguments of the Bhagavad Gita and other sacred books will be used to justify bloody wars and the suppression of human rights. An independent and powerful Hindu India clinging to its caste culture will be a menace to civilisation and world peace. The sooner we realise the truth that we are like other peoples of the world in all essential respects, the better it will be for us and the world.

Our national life is not different from that of other nations. We are moved by the same emotions, aspirations, ideals and theories. We have adopted similar methods of organising life in various aspects. We have used and misused our powers and resources exactly like other men in other countries. We are closely following the example of modern nations in science, religion, economics, industry, politics, and all other departments of life, in our virtues as well as in our vices, but unfortunately much more in the latter than in the former. What we want is not a unique, separatist attitude. Let us realise that we are only a part of a single humanity and have in all essentials to think and live alike, and be guided by the same principles in religion as in politics. No doubt we may be able to make our special contribution to world happiness, but the less we prattle and boast about what we are not actually doing the better. When we have done it, or are fairly on the way to do it we may claim the world's attention. But now our uniqueness is no better than the uniqueness of Ravana or Hitler—it is a uniqueness in unrighteousness and untruth, in caste and priestcraft, in the contradictions of life and religion, in the suppression of the most sacred human feelings and the persecution of our fellow-beings.

There is little profit in parading the teachings of the ancient Rishis as representing our plan of Swaraj when century after century we have defied them in organisation of life with harder hearts than the ancient Jews who crucified Christ. In spite of their awful failure the younger nations of the West seem to have made a more honest and earnest attempt to realise the teachings of Vedanta and all true religions

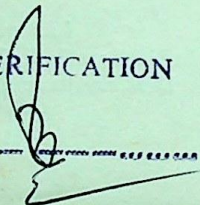
than the self-conceited Hindu masters have ever done. The latter are even now openly defying in the name of the highest truths of religion and science, all attempts to restore to the Hindu peoples their natural human dignity and check the system of rank deception and exploitation which keep them hypnotised and enslaved to their castes and priests. The present generation of Hindus has hardly anything to justify the superior airs which some of them assume when they talk of Hindu culture. As Sir P. C. Ray said : "Hinduism is only tolerant and Catholic in mere empty words. In actual life it is rigid, cruel and repulsive." Even saints and prophets like Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore are in reality outcastes to the mentality of the orthodox Hindu majority. They would disown them if their traditional life were touched. The claim of superior culture is an utterly false imposture and a clever manœuvre, with the help of ancient books and theories, intended to conceal the hideousness of Hindu life and the brutality of its caste masters. We must stop this bluster. Let us make ourselves at least as decent as other civilised peoples before we plume ourselves on our achievements.

The risk of a revival of Brahman Imperialism in a disguised form is too serious to be ignored. The immensity of the danger that threatens the Hindus may be imagined when we remember that even Mahatma Gandhi, when he started the Khilafat agitation, openly confessed that he was one of those who believed that caste was a good institution. He has changed; but the other Hindu leaders have not, at any rate a large number of them have

not. The President of the All-India Varnashrama Swarajya Sangh speaking at a public meeting in Kumbhakonam on the 20th May last year denounced Swarajya without caste as a body without soul (*Madras Mail*, 22nd May, 1940). He is but one of the thousands of Hindu leaders who hold that "caste" is the soul of Hinduism. Brahman sophists like Sir S. Radhakrishnan who, as becomes a philosopher, discourses on the ideal view of caste, of the division into four Varnas and justifies it on the ground that "it illustrates the spirit of comprehensive synthesis characteristic of the Hindu mind with its faith in the collaboration of races and the co-operation of cultures," although "In all the known periods of Indian history after the system of caste had come into existence, it has been an instrument of intolerance and oppression."* In subjection to a foreign ruler the Hindus feel at least the comradeship of common thraldom. Under Swaraj the Hindus may be split up into numerous irreconcilable groups; caste imperialism may triumph; the disunion of the Hindus may be exploited by the Muhammadans. Hindu imperialists who think caste to be the soul of Hinduism may join hands with the Muslims or foreign invaders against their fellow Hindus and again impose upon the Hindu masses the yoke of caste slavery which has brought the whole nation to its present degradation. Freedom with caste is a mockery. The Hindu masses who are but pawns in the hands of their caste masters will be safer in subjection to a foreign rule than under the free domain of the superior castes.

Any imperialism is more endurable than caste

* Pages 44-46, Hinduism and the Modern World, K. M. Panikkar.

domination. It is this truth we have to recognise and proclaim. There can be no compromise on this point. The Hindu nation must decide whether it will have "caste" or Swaraj—the two cannot co-exist. The Hindu masses must be on their guard against Caste-Raj being re-established in the name of Swaraj. Their own leaders and priests have betrayed them time after time in the past. Those who betrayed them are even now in power, in the Congress and Socialist movements, in the temples, in the villages and in the favour of the rulers. They have not shown any change of heart. The Hindu masses who want real freedom, who want to be as free in Hindu society as the Muslims and the Christians are free in their respective communities, should with one voice raise the cry—"No Freedom with Caste." Let every one who dares to demand Swaraj or independence for India publicly pledge himself to root out caste. It should be clearly impressed on all liberty-loving Hindus and Indian Nationalists that the nation cannot have independence and yet deny freedom and equality to its Hindu subjects. The revival of Caste-Raj in any form is the greatest menace of the present crisis which all liberty-loving people, Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians, should unite in combating.

HINDU CONGRESS

PROVISIONAL RULES

1. The name of the Association shall be the Hindu Congress.

2. The objects of the Congress shall be—

   (*a*) To be the nucleus of a socio-religious national (but non-political) organisation of the Hindus.

   (*b*) To unite the Hindus irrespective of their religious views in a common brotherhood without distinctions of caste.

   (*c*) To promote better management of temples, Mutts, and other institutions of the Hindus in the spirit of service and brotherhood of the Hindu people.

   (*d*) To organise, train and maintain Hindu missionaries.

   (*e*) To promote reforms and legislation in consonance with the objects of the Congress.

   (*f*) To co-operate with other Hindu and non-Hindu organisations for the growing realisation of human brotherhood.

3. Every member of the Congress shall take a pledge (1) that he or she will not directly or indirectly oppose or interfere with, except as parent or legal guardian, the freedom of marriage and other forms of association of one Hindu with another Hindu ; and (2) that he or she will support all State legislation in consonance with the objects of the Congress.

4. The Congress believes in giving freedom to all Hindus in the matter of marriage and in promoting State legislation for abolishing all recognition of caste by the State for any purpose whatsoever.

5. The detailed Constitution of the Congress will be settled by the Congress itself at a meeting to be convened for the purpose.

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